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The Editors
LOOKING FOR A
NEW LIBERALISM

ONE DOLLAR

DECEMBER 5, 1980

hristmas books critics' choices

Richard John Neuhaus
Robert F. Drinan
Francine du Plessix Gray
John Deedy
Denise Levertov
Francine Cardman
Raymond A. Schroth
Rosemary Deen
Kathryn Marshall
David Tracy

A CHRISTIAN HOMOSEXUALITY?

EDWARD VACEK

Living with the Love Canal

FREDERICK T. MUTO

Problems of federalism

Canada's constitutional

JORDAN BISHOP

A future for Belgium?

JAMES D. TRACY

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Correspondence

Reagan's Mike

Laguna Hills, Cal.

To the Editors: Terribly disappointed with the pro-Reagan article by Michael Novak [Oct. 24]. Hope others may voice their disgust at many of the false statements. He admires Reagan's good sense. How can that be?

(MRS.) JOSEPH LAMBERT

Grudge against liberals

Providence, R.I.

To the Editors: Alas, for once Michael Novak's presidential endorsement, this time for Ronald Reagan [Oct. 24], did not doom the man he favored.

And once again, alas, for in recent years Mr. Novak has harbored a strong grudge against liberals, a grudge which he recently extends against most "educated Americans." His ill will appears in mean-spirited and simplistic judgments, as in his statement that he admires Ronald Reagan "simply as a man." Reagan, he says, " is not as sophisticated as some with graduate school training, but on his feet he thinks as quickly, as, and with greater common sense, clarity, and humor than, the two pietists with whom he is competing for our votes." I resent Mr. Novak's easy slur against educated Americans almost as much as I resent his enthusiasm for Ronald Reagan, who believes our survival in a nuclear age depends upon the building of more nuclear bombs, the purpose of which is annihilation, not survival.

GARY ZEBRUN

Presiding at Eucharist

La Oroya, Peru

To the Editors: I am very grateful to Father James F. McNiff for coming to the defense of Latin American diocesan clergy [Correspondence, Aug. 29]. As a "neophyte" of over seven years work in Peru, I (and our Pastoral Team) am privileged to work closely with some outstanding diocesan priests. We are actively recruiting and supporting vocations for the local dioceses. Nor do I want to denigrate the personal character or the pastoral effectiveness of those priests who discreetly keep a family on the side. The simple question was: who should preside at the Eucharist?

Authorized pastoral agents (be they ordained deacons or not) can conduct religious services with the distribution of Communion. When I arrived here one good man would take the consecrated species to his church in a coffee tin. Yet traditional theology always had serious objections to receiving Communion outside of Mass. We must wait for the evidence to see if real Eucharistic communities can survive on such aborted services. Our own evidence is not decisive, but perhaps among less educated people there is more honesty to have simple Scripture-prayer services in the absence of the full Eucharistic liturgy.

But for all our age and cultural differences, Father McNiff and I agree that we must do all we positively can within the limitations of the present discipline. But while obedient to the law, we can creatively and respectfully imagine other options and keep alive the hope that laws can change. Remember, the years just before Vatican II were among the darkest for those waiting to have the liturgy celebrated in the vernacular.

(REV.) ERNEST W. RANLY

Those were the daze

Brighton, Mass.

To the Editors: As a member of a later generation of students (Georgetown, Class of '71), I found Ray Schroth's personal essay on Catholic college education to be both informative and stimulating [Sept. 26]. I am certain that his piece must have touched a sympathetic chord among his contemporaries. However, I would like to point out a major contrast in the experience of my classmates who underwent the rites of passage of the years 1967-1971.

In his essay, Father Schroth makes reference to a "confidence that individual man, once set free from authority and constraint, had within him the intellectual and moral resources to remake his world from scratch." All free-thinking people like to believe this. But during my years at Georgetown that very confidence was lacking, except while under the spell of narcotizing drugs, music, or rhetoric. In the clear light of day, most of us saw the enormity of the wrongs of our society, and, sadly, saw at the same time the makings of an Orwellian police state (Corporations-Pentagon-Nixon administration-CIA-FBI-Police) that would go to extremes to suppress dissent.

If that vision was not sufficient to erode one's confidence in remaking the world from scratch, add to it the onslaught of photographic images and rhetoric from Vietnam, Havana, the Black Panthers, Bob Dylan, Jim Morrison, *et. al*. We walked about in a daze of fragmentation. By the time graduation arrived, many of us felt that the best we could hope for was to select a town or city to live in and within our chosen field to change just one regulation, policy, or outlook with which we disagreed.

Could the theology and ethics we studied at Georgetown actually answer the urgent, schizophrenic demands of that time period? Could the Jesuit presence instill in us the quiet confidence to be on the "right" side of an issue? One thing for certain: there has never been a test for the Catholic church like the second half of the twentieth century.

DOUGLAS CORCORAN

Commonweal welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters of not more than 250 or 300 words naturally have a better chance of being published.

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PATHS TO A NEW LIBERALISM

WHAT IS LEFT on the Left? The question is taking many forms these days. What should Democrats do? Is liberalism dead? Is there a new liberalism? The current discussion is the child of the latest election, but that is one of the things that leads to confusion. As we argued here in the last issue, conservatives won big on November 4, but conservatism won small. By and large, Americans voted for a change; they voted on the traditional liberal turf of The Economy; and if conservatism has something to crow about, it is mainly that many voters no longer distrust it so much as to prevent them from signaling their dissatisfaction with the administration in power. But liberalism has nothing to crow about either. The election was no big swing from liberalism—in fact, liberalism has been in trouble for a long time. Since the Second World War, there has only been one sweeping liberal victory in presidential elections—in 1964, when Lyndon Johnson profited from the reaction to Kennedy's assassination and the fear of Goldwater's "extremism in the defense of liberty." The other Democratic victories were squeakers—in 1948, 1960, and 1976—and the latter two times the winning candidates were only ambiguously liberal. The big winners were status-quo Republicans, Eisenhower and Nixon in 1972. Even if a healthy chunk of the Anderson vote were added to Reagan's total, the president-elect still did not match the combined Nixon and Wallace vote of '68 or the Nixon sweep of '72. In effect, liberalism's troubles have been a long time coming. As *The Economist* wrote, 1980 "was the election that Watergate postponed. The Democrats have never really recovered from the wounds of 1968." Or to go further back, from the wounds (proud ones, though they may be) of the civil-rights revolution that, along with inevitable social change, broke up the Democratic Solid South.

The picture is, of course, even more complicated. On the one hand, the public's attitudes have grown significantly more liberal in a number of respects during the last decades. The issue of race is an outstanding example (although the change is not so decisive that blacks and other minorities cannot be bitter about recent setbacks or alarmed at the resurgence of blatant racism in the form of strutting Klansmen). Citizens continue to express concern about the issues liberalism promoted—decent provisions for jobs, old age, health, education, a safe environment—and even declare a willingness to spend more for them. But complaints of "waste" are equally strong, and dissatisfaction with liberal measures has found many adherents, not only among Republicans, but on both wings of the Democratic party, among radicals who thought these measures were turned against those they were meant to serve, and among neoconservatives who questioned their efficacy and their effect on the social fabric.

All this is background to the talk about a "new liberalism." Most of this talk is decidedly disappointing. On the one hand, the "new liberalism" sounds a lot like

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the old Republicanism, or even like the Carterism that the electorate has just rejected. Cut social spending, streamline social regulation, build a stronger economy by giving business more tax advantages, boost America, and increase armaments. Between this and Reaganism there is only a matter of degree, plus perhaps a firmer attachment to the Bill of Rights. Another version of a "new liberalism," cropping up after the election, seems to promise simply a new aggressiveness mirroring that of the New Right—and on many of the same issues: abortion, women's rights, public displays of religion, etc. Planned Parenthood and the American Civil Liberties Union have embarked on advertising campaigns attacking right-to-lifers and the Moral Majority. The latter, in fact, is well on its way to becoming the bugaboo of these liberals. But beyond raising militancy—and funds—among the already converted, these efforts are unlikely to succeed, indeed may very well backfire. They misread, and may even magnify, the power of groups like the Moral Majority, and they are insensitive to the legitimate concerns that those groups have channeled into primitive politics. To treat opposition to abortion, for example, as the possession of fanatic blue-noses is about on the same level of insult as treating concern for the security of Israel as an expression of atavistic tribalism.

In our view, the central question for an authentic, and politically successful, "new liberalism" should be, Who will pay? The U.S. is facing massive economic adjustment—to a world of expensive energy, of nations equally advanced economically, of rising nations offering competition for jobs and capital, of multi-national corporations, and of unprecedented movements of production and financing. In this adjustment, some will be winners and some will be losers. Only the left is prepared to discuss openly the fair distribution of those rewards and burdens. Our guess is that the political party which develops a persuasive incomes policy will take the marbles in 1984; that ought to be a leading priority for a new liberalism.

Yet with the Reagan economic policy still hatching, a new liberalism could also start organizing itself around two foreign-policy planks:

First, *human rights*. David Rockefeller has just traveled to some of the brightest spots on the map of torture, assuring the local notables that, under Reagan, it will be business as usual. With enemies like that, the advocates of human rights should be able to find friends. It is true that the American public is tired of being "kicked around" by ungrateful Latins, Europeans, ayatollahs, etc.; but in fact this testy mood does not exclude considerable suspicion of a foreign policy based on theories of containment and superpower rivalry alone or on the protection of raw materials. The long-run benefits, and the political attractiveness, of a policy that does not make the U.S. a counter-revolutionary monolith or cynical partner of dictatorships, are there for those willing to preach them.

The same is true about *arms reduction*. Popular and elite opinion has swung from an advocacy of less military spending to an advocacy of more. It can be swung back again, *if* the new liberalism has the courage, as well as the political shrewdness, to prick the balloon of today's scare talk, to point out, for instance, that the Soviets have been relatively steady, not suddenly expansionist, in their military spending, that NATO and the U.S. outspend the Soviets and Warsaw Pact in military matters, and that, with China counted in among its adversaries, Moscow is at least outspent three to two. The new liberalism should not be quasi-pacifist. It should be willing to spend money on sensible military reforms. It may even be divided on the issue of the draft. But the current bout of arms fever is subject to every criticism conservatives have directed toward liberal social programs: symbol instead of substance, "throwing money at problems," consideration of benefits without equal consideration of cost. The bill for increased arms spending will be high, in taxes and inflation. A "new liberalism" ought to have opposed it.

Report from Canada

BRISK CONSTITUTIONAL

THE NEW FEDERALISM

VERY EARLY on the morning of October 24, Canada's federal Parliament was the scene of a session described variously as "rowdy," "angry," hostile and bitter. For the fourth time in the past twenty-five years, the government proposed—and sustained—a closure of debate. As the voting began, a small group of Tories left their benches and surrounded the speaker's chair, demanding to be heard. The rest of the Tory caucus, *en masse*, solemnly sang "Oh Canada." The vote for closure was carried by the Liberals' comfortable majority. The NDP (New Democratic Party) voted with the Tories. The vote on the substance of the government motion was an anticlimax; all but one of the New Democrats voted with the Liberals to refer the government's resolution on the repatriation of the constitution to committee. When the eleven-day debate ended, thirty-three Liberals, thirty-one Tories and eight New Democrats had spoken to the motion, and the only substantial revision in the proposal—an affirmation of provincial jurisdiction over resources—had come as a result of what appeared to many as a private deal between Prime Minister Trudeau and NDP leader Ed Broadbent.

By sundown the Tory premiers of Alberta, Newfoundland, and Manitoba, along with the Social Credit premier of British Columbia, had formally decided to contest the government's move in the courts.

Even for devoted Canadian newswatchers, trying to keep up with the great debate on the constitution is something like taking a picture of a fast-moving train with a box camera. The debate never stops, and while the players are all known, there are some questions about the rules of the game.

Canada has for a constitution a combination of the British Constitution—which of course is unwritten—and the tired and true British North America Act, usually referred to as the B.N.A. Act. This is a piece of legislation written in Canada by Canadian political leaders and enacted by the British Parlia-

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ment at Westminster in 1867. It is mostly concerned with sorting out responsibilities between federal and provincial jurisdiction, between the federal government and the ten provinces that now make up the Canadian Federation. For many Canadians it is a disgrace that the basic charter by which the political existence of the country is defined is in fact the act of a foreign government, and that legally it cannot be amended or changed except by that government. The question of "bringing home" the B.N.A. Act was first raised, in a formal way, at least, in 1927. Fifty-three years and several conferences later, the constitution has become a major issue.

This round began last spring as the Quebec referendum on M. Lévesque's "Sovereignty Association" took place. Part of the campaign for a "No" vote, led by Quebec Liberal leader Claude Ryan with some help from federal Liberals, was the insistence that a "No" vote was not merely a negative thing. A "No" vote was a vote for a new federalism. M. Ryan produced a "beige paper" that would resolve the problem of Quebec being considered as a province like the others by making the others provinces like Quebec—with a degree of provincial autonomy that few federal leaders, of whatever party, could accept.

For his part, M. Trudeau has had the constitition on his mind for a long time. His present proposal includes a federal bill of rights that would be binding on the provinces, guarantee of some wealth-sharing among provinces to be managed by the federal government (this exists now as "equalization payments") and a formula for amending the constitution that would not give a veto to each and every province.

Over the summer of 1980, formal and informal meetings were held around the country. In September, a meeting of first ministers demonstrated that the provinces were unable to reach an agreement, even though (or perhaps because) the meeting took place in the shadow of an implied threat of unilateral action by the federal Parliament. This would take the form of a resolution to the British Parliament requesting that jurisdiction over the constitution be transferred to Canada under conditions outlined in the resolution.

Both federal and provincial leaders are concerned over the power to manage the economy, jurisdiction over resources (now provincial), the advisability of vesting a bill of rights in a new constitution, and the way in which this constitution is to be amended. M. Trudeau has already declared that he will not trade basic rights for economic considerations. Yet it is fairly obvious, as the resolution goes to committee, that he is open to negotiation on a number of other things. The deal made with Mr. Broadbent concerns provincial control over resources, and Broadbent's support is crucial, not so much in terms of votes—the Liberals have a majority government—as in terms of geography. The Liberals have only two seats west of Ontario. The NDP has twenty-six. That Western support will give the Liberals more credibility, especially since much of the hard-line opposition to the government's proposal comes from the West.

Provincial leaders are also wary of an amending formula that would in effect by-pass provincial control in the event of a deadlock. If the provinces were unable to agree, provision is made for a national referendum on constitutional amendments after two years. Given population density, this would mean an effective veto for Ontario and Quebec, but for no other provinces. Given the historical inability of provinces to agree on anything, it might well mean in practice that amendment by referendum would be the usual procedure.

The vesting of rights in a federal constitution is another debated point. For some, it conflicts with a basic element in Canada's unwritten constitution: parliamentary supremacy. A parliamentary system, it is contended, is in itself a sufficient guarantee of basic freedoms. In addition, the present bill of rights—which is an act of the federal Parliament—does not apply to matters under provincial jurisdiction, such as education. That may be one reason why M. Trudeau wants a bill of rights in the constitution. For that same reason many provincial leaders see it as an intrusion by the federal government on matters of provincial jurisdiction. In addition, such an arrangement is extremely inflexible. Canada's Supreme Court has no tradition of involvement in such questions as exists in the United States, and even some strong civil libertarians fear that the courts might take an extremely conservative line in interpreting a bill of rights.

There are also some indications that the British Parliament might raise some problems on the question of a bill of rights. Britain does not have one, at least written into a constitution. To turn the constitution over to Canada is one thing. To legislate a bill of rights for another country is another.

Proposals for a bill of rights include the thorny question of minority language rights, which raises hackles almost everywhere. Premier Brian Peckford of Newfoundland has expressed worries not only about offshore mineral rights, but also about the effects of the bill of rights on Newfoundland's unique educational system, where almost all schools are both denominational and state-funded.

As this question is raised by a majority Liberal government in Ottawa, there are now no provincial Liberal governments. In British Columbia the Social Credit Party is in power. In Saskatchewan there is an NDP government. The rest, except for René Lévesque's Parti Quebecois, are Tory. Yet the polarization over the constitition does not follow party lines. British Columbia's premier Bill Bennett, as might be expected, has lined up with Alberta's Peter Lougheed. Alan Blakeney of Saskatchewan, heading the only socialist government in Canada, has serious doubts about vesting a bill of rights but is open to discussion. Manitoba's Sterling Lyon, the most conservative of Tory premiers, is probably the most partisan of those who oppose M. Trudeau, while Bill Davis of Ontario has consistently supported the federal position, as has

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Richard Hatfield of New Brunswick. John Buchanan of Nova Scotia is concerned about offshore oil and gas resources but is biding his time. Brian Peckford of Newfoundland is opposed to any deals on resources, while MacLean of Prince Edward Island has maintained the lowest profile of all. René Lévesque, who thinks that a federal constitution is someone else's problem, was the first to threaten court action against the proposal of unilateral action by the federal government.

As the proposal goes to committee, finance minister Alan MacEachen has brought down a budget which includes a tax on natural gas. Alberta's first reaction was, to say the least, negative.

There is a curious irony in the fact that it is probably much easier for M. Trudeau to carry out his constitutional plans with René Lévesque in power than it would be with Quebec Liberal leader Claude Ryan. Ryan's brand of new federalism would lead to sharp conflict with the federal government. Lévesque is willing to stir the pot, but in the end he is uninterested in any federalism, new or old.

M. Trudeau is pushing ahead. He hopes to have the resolution, amended and polished, through Parliament by December and through the British Parliament by July of 1981. Court action by some provincial governments will most likely prove to be a bust, but its importance is political rather than legal. Trudeau is counting on the support of the people, and here he is probably right, even with the perennial Quebec problem compounded with talk of Western separatism.

Confusion is increased by the fact that the B.N.A. Act is not all of Canada's constitution, and that bringing it home would not, of itself, change the unwritten constitution. Or would it? That, in the end, may be the real question.

JORDAN BISHOP

(Jordan Bishop, a regular contributor, teaches at the College of Cape Breton in Nova Scotia.)

Of several minds: *Abigail McCarthy*

SERVANT'S SEASON

A CONCEPT NOT CONGENIAL TO AMERICAN MINDS

"TO TAKE a *servant's* form he came . . ." So sings the church in the hymn for Lauds on Christmas Day. We have heard a lot of late of Jesus, the Suffering Servant, foretold by Isaias. And he said of himself, "I am here among you as your servant."

The concept of servanthood is not very congenial to American minds. Perhaps because wave after wave of immigrants, forced by necessity to accept conditions of servitude, did not want even the word "servant" to apply to their descendants. Perhaps because the word applied to self smacks of nineteenth century unctuousness and hypocrisy—"I am, sir, your humble and obedient servant." And yet it is a concept we must come to terms with if we take the Word at all seriously.

Four years ago I wrote in this space about a conference at the University of Dallas in Texas optimistically entitled "The Laity—A New Direction." Throughout the discussions there, I noted, ran "a thread of acknowledgment that a new kind of manipulation of the laity has developed in this day of 'strategies' and coalitions." We see so clearly what other people should do: we go to tell them so in our lobbies and pressure groups, to admonish the business people and the politicians without thought that they also may be lay Christians who should be asked to help find solutions. Howard Blake, director of the conference, said that Christians had learned to go to the ghetto, "hat in hand" to learn the costly lesson of identification, but that this attitude was markedly lacking in our dealings with those in power.

Since that time some of the leaders of that conference have formed a group called The Servant Society. I read their bulletins and letters half-agreeing, half-questioning.

The basic thought of The Servant Society is explained in its folder: "Christian thinking and theology has barely changed over the centuries even though the individual came to be dwarfed by larger and larger systems. As people felt more and more helpless to change the world, the church—because it did not do or say otherwise—has lent support to the pessimistic view that although God changes *people* he does not change *institutions*. . . . We of The Servant Society believe that systems can be changed—that they will be changed by responsible leaders who themselves are changed by the Spirit of God."

The idea that the church has not dealt with institutions over the centuries is, at best, unhistorical. (What of all the struggles to define a just society, stewardship, etc.?) But it is certainly true that in recent history there has been little effort to define the terms of Christian leadership in government and business from the point of view of those who must exercise it or to minister to them. Senator Mark Hatfield, a Republican liberal, one of the few to speak of his public service as a Christian vocation, has been vocal on the subject. On the one hand, he pointed out in a speech at Princeton Seminary some years ago, there are the pastors concerned exclusively with the state of a leader's soul; on the other are the "prophets"—those concerned with specific issues such as civil rights, the plight of the poor, world hunger, Vietnam. These latter, who emerged in numbers during the sixties, have reclaimed for the church the voice of prophecy. The time has come for pastor-prophets, because the prophets have regarded legislators from whom they demanded courageous stands more as instruments than as persons—and have given little sympathy or personal support to those for whom a costly vote might end a career. (This year Senator Hatfield, a born-again Baptist, made a similar statement about the Moral Major-

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ity and the New Right.)

Undoubtedly there are businessmen who feel the same way about the prophets, at least. How is The Servant Society to minister to them? First of all, it seems clear, by affirming the concept of servanthood. The Servant Society leans heavily on the thought of Robert Greenleaf, a retired executive, who wrote *Servant Leadership* (Paulist Press). Greenleaf says that the course of his life was determined by a college professor who told his class that a new problem in our times was that the large institutions which dominate our society—church, business, government, labor, the universities—are not serving us well. "You can do as I do, stand outside and criticize, bring pressure if you can, write and argue about it. All of this may do some good. But nothing of substance will happen unless there are people inside these institutions who are able to (and want to) lead them into better performance for the public good." Greenleaf decided to work from the inside.

He says that his idea of the servant as leader came from a story of Herman Hesse's, *Journey to the East*, an allegory about a band of men on a mythical journey who are sustained by the spirit of their servant Leo. When he disappears they cannot finish the journey. The story, Greenleaf says, tells us that the true leader is seen as servant *first*. Servant leadership begins with the feeling that one wants to serve. Then one aspires to lead in order to serve. That is different from the person who is leader first because of the drive for power or wealth. Caring today is mediated through large institutions. If a better society is to be built, it is Greenleaf's contention that the best way is to "raise both the capacity to serve and every performance as servant of existing major institutions by new regenerative forces operating within them."

Is this realistic? Perhaps. An auto industry bent on serving well might have given us smaller, energy-efficient cars long ago. An auto designer who thought of himself as a responsible servant would hardly have been capable of designing a car like the Pinto apt to burst into flame on impact. Ideally, in a servant society, an Ernest Fitzgerald would be sustained and supported rather than harassed for a decade after revealing a massive cost overrun in the Defense Department. There wouldn't have been a cost overrun in the first place.

But to a generation instructed in the idea of institutional oppression and violence, a generation which has seen change brought about by confrontation, the idea is bound to seem palliative and simplistic. Still, because it is grounded on the teaching of the Servant who spoke of the mustard seed and the leaven, we can hope that it is more than that—that the analysis is as sound as the idea is inspiring.

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

Of several minds: *Frank Getlein*

THE SWING THING

ONE KINDLY LIGHT AMID THE ENCIRCLING GLOOM

WOE AND DESPAIR is all about I see, Democrats clutching what hair they have left, crying out to heaven, rending their garments and sprinkling their clothes with ashes. Well they might. They have no one but themselves to blame for the straits in which they find themselves. It was the Democrats who gave us Jimmy Carter in the first place as it was assuredly the Democrats who gave us Richard Nixon. Now they have given us Ronald Reagan and are moaning and groaning as if some mysterious power from outer space had inflicted the second California Republican upon us in less than a decade. It was no such power, it was the Democrats.

For some years I used to give an annual talk to the Women's National Democratic Club. It was invariably on some uplifting subject in the arts but I always seized the opportunity to tell them the only reason I voted for their stupid party was that if I voted Republican my arm would fall off. Now I hope they see what I meant. It was one thing to offer Jimmy Carter once when no one knew much about him except his ostentatious piety, but to offer him again, after the nation had watched him in action and, rather more, inaction, for four years, is either stupidity or *hubris* or both and it got the reward those qualities usually get and well deserve. Ronald Reagan? The voters probably would have elected Caligula except that the poor chap never made it to thirty-five.

Anyway, that's why all the gloom and doom about the dread swing to the right is misplaced. There isn't and hasn't been any swing anywhere except away from fools and knaves in the office of the presidency and we have had a lot of them lately. It's a melancholy exercise but as someone said when Democratic politics were fun, Let's look at the record.

Lyndon Johnson was remarkably well-prepared for the presidency and he blew that whole capital of legislative expertise, personal friendship or at least acquaintance with everyone who mattered, an uncanny ability to practice politics, not in the superficial sense of getting elected but in the democratic sense of achieving workable compromise between opposed forces, all that and more, for the sake of an idiotic, impossible-to-win war halfway around the globe, based on the blithering assumption that if we didn't fight them there, the Viet Cong would be landing at Santa Barbara as soon as they got a boat.

Among its lesser evils, that war tore the Democratic party apart. Eugene McCarthy offered himself as a Democrat against the war and Johnson withdrew after what amounted to repudiation in New Hampshire. Hubert Humphrey, another monumentally well-prepared Democrat for the presidency, was destroyed by the war as Johnson was, since he was unable to come out against it while serving as Johnson's Vice President.

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On any conventional form-sheet, Richard Nixon was at least as well prepared for the presidency as Johnson and Humphrey: Representative and Senator from the most populous state, a spectacular career in the Senate, two terms as vice-president to the most universally popular president since FDR. Moreover, he had a secret plan to end the war. In reality, of course, he had no such plan; he merely had an advisor and later Secretary of State with ambitions, in time fulfilled, to be the biggest bomber in history. And in reality, despite the form-sheets, Nixon was tragically—and farcically—ill-prepared for the presidency because he lacked any moral dimension whatever. He had moved so far so fast on anti-Communism as a surrogate for morality as well as for serious thought, that it never occurred to him to wonder about the oughtness of actions, only about their short-term efficacy and, if needed, their deniability. He was, in his own word, a crook. Like Johnson he was elected by the greatest majority in presidential history and then decisively repudiated by the same people through their elected representatives, including those of his own party.

Nixon's hand-picked successor, Gerald Ford (chosen when the first choice, Spiro Agnew, turned out to be a crook himself and became the first baby thrown from the sleigh speeding toward impeachment) was widely perceived, and more or less correctly so, as an amiable and honest mediocrity. As such he was rather a relief from the *sturm und drang* of Johnson and Nixon and might well have presided over a kind of return to normalcy without the Teapot Dome. But as Johnson blew his capital of governmental brilliance, so Ford blew his of amiable, honest mediocrity when, as if in response to a thirty-day due-bill, he performed the one notable act of his term in office, the pardon of the chief begetter and beneficiary of all the Watergate crimes. While the members of the gang filed glumly into their prison cells, the chief crook went to the comfort of his largely government-paid-for palace in California, attended by government-paid flunkies of various kinds, and proceeded to paste together the book that made him

rich. Abruptly, the "honest" dropped out of the general perception of Ford. The inevitable suspicion, which still lingers and always will, was that there had been a deal: Ford got the White House, Nixon got the Pardon, and Haig, the honest broker in the transaction, got the captain-generalcy of the Free World. Thus in his turn, Ford was repudiated at the polls.

At that it was a close thing. As the '76 campaign wore on and people got to see more and more of Jimmy Carter, they liked what they saw less and less. Finally, confronted with the choice, they chose the mediocrity they didn't know over the one they did know who had sold out to Nixon. Ironically, after the Pardon, if Watergate was to be put behind us, in Ford's phrase, it could only be done by ousting Ford. He was duly ousted, if barely.

And then there was Carter and now there is Reagan as the only available other choice and you can't really blame the electorate. The Democrats not only gave them a do-nothing president but, having watched him do nothing and having themselves protested his doing nothing, proceeded to offer him again.

Carter's basic problem as president was that when he came into office he hadn't a clue as to how the national government works and when he leaves, in January, he still won't. He seriously believed, as far as one can tell, that saying something is the same as accomplishing it. He never learned, really, that there was a truly equal body of government at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, that both houses of it enjoyed enormous majorities of his own party and that the way government works is for the executive and the legislative branches to talk to each other, to persuade each other, to give each other reliable information on probabilities and possibilities, and so on, all the elementary machinery known to any serious high school student of government. He believed, with TR, that the presidency was a bully pulpit, but unlike Teddy, that's all he believed it was and for that matter he wasn't all that bully in that pulpit.

Out of all this a pattern emerges and it is not a pattern of any swing to the right. It is a pattern of rejecting one unsatisfactory president after another. Reagan's main qualification was that he wasn't Carter, just as Carter's was that he wasn't Nixon or Nixon's servitor and pardoner, Ford, and Nixon's was that, as of 1968, he had not fought the war in Indochina, killed thousands of Americans and uncounted Indochinese for no perceivably rational purpose. Like the frogs in the pond, we have been getting for our kings storks who eat us or logs who simply lie there. Like the frogs, too, we protest to the Zeus of the ballot box and bring on the next stork or log.

When I started making money—shortly after I stopped teaching at Catholic colleges—I started buying new cars, not from any wish for vulgar display, but simply in happy anticipation of leaving behind the problems that seemed to me inherent and endless in the used cheapies I had been buying 'til then. A delusion, of course; the new cars have been just as full of problems as the used ones; moreover, the problems are more expensive and you pay the money to the same outfit that sold you the car with all its defects. My solution to this problem has been never to buy the same brand twice. My realist wife points out that the other brand will have the same, perhaps worse, problems: I reply that that's doubtless true, but at least I will not be swindled twice in a row by the same swindler.

That's the message of the electorate and it is going to keep on being the message until one of the two parties, or possibly a third, comes up with a new model that works.

FRANK GETLEIN

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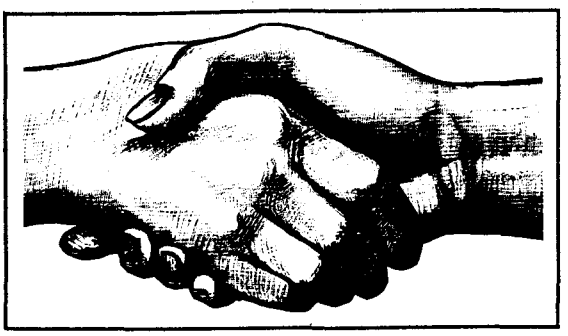

A Christian homosexuality?

EDWARD VACEK

THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATES over homosexuality are heated up like a blast furnace. Ever since 1969 when homosexuals began to assert gay pride, the solid iron ore of traditional sexual preferences has turned into a churning, molten mass. The first, faltering moves "out of the closet" have prompted "Save Our Children" campaigns and Protestant ordinations of homosexuals. Unfortunately, like a blast furnace, the issue has generated for most people immense heat and little light.

One of the first steps toward the light is a confession of some basic ignorance. The central unknown is why some people (somewhere between 5 and 10 percent of the population) are exclusively homosexual. Some evidence suggests that homosexuality is biologically based. There is greater evidence that it results from early childhood experiences, though no one is sure what factor or factors lead to it. There is some scant evidence that it can be learned in adolescence, either when one is frustrated at heterosexual activity or is initiated into homosexual activity by someone more experienced. The best answer at present is that we do not know why people are homosexual.

Recently I asked thirty-five of my students whether they thought that being a homosexual was more like having a withered arm or like being left-handed. The point of this comparison should be clear. Most of us think that there is something biologically askew with having a deformed arm; but few of us think that left-handers have something wrong with their biological make-up. The world would not be greatly altered if the majority of people were left-handed. The world, however, would be a worse place if the vast majority had withered arms.

Much to my surprise, all but two of my students thought homosexuality was like being left-handed. These students are training to be future ministers, and I was consoled at the compassion and understanding they will probably show to homosexuals they will meet. And yet, I still had to ask myself, Are they correct?

Homosexual *orientation* must be distinguished from homosexual *activity*. Those who are homosexual may remain single or celibate; and they can, at least physically, engage in heterosexual acts. Many, in fact, are married. The orientation is not externally visible. It is experienced internally as an enduring, romantic, and sexual attraction to members of the same sex.

Sexual orientation is not a habit like smoking. Hence one is not morally responsible for having the orientation. One is responsible for what one does with this orientation, just as heterosexuals are responsible for how they express their own orientation.

Few people are totally homosexual or heterosexual. Children, adolescents, and even some heterosexual adults quite commonly go through homosexual phases. Good counselors usually encourage them not to make too much of a passing dalliance. Similarly, some homosexuals occasionally experience heterosexual attraction. So we are speaking of a dominant or prevailing pattern of attraction toward one sex or the other.

How do homosexuals experience themselves and their activity? Put simply, some are quite happy with their condition, some confused, and some quite unhappy. To those who are at peace with their homosexuality it seems an affront to demand that they change themselves. They ask heterosexuals to imagine wanting to extinguish one of the great sources of *their* identity, namely, the heterosexual feelings that form so much of the way a heterosexual relates to the world.

To those who are confused, gay alliances recommend that they accent the heterosexual aspect of themselves as long as they can, if only as a way of avoiding societal defamation.

Those who are unhappy with their orientation are often encouraged to change. The problem is, most will be unable to do so. The change is "morally impossible" because many homosexuals do not have the time or money to enter a therapy where there are no "sure-fire cures." The *most* optimistic of therapists report only a 60 percent "cure rate," and this cure is

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reached only by those homosexuals most strongly motivated to change.

Conversions in orientation due to special graces may occur, but many claims of these graced reorientations have been shown to be misleading or false. Frequently the change is from active homosexuality to a dormant, celibate homosexuality. In other cases, the "conversion" is only short-lived. In the words of a recent Vatican Declaration, many are "incurable."

It should be clear in what follows that no one recommends the kind of activity that would be condemned if it were performed in a heterosexual context. No argument for homosexual relations should be construed as an argument for promiscuity, prostitution, mate swapping, infidelity, and the like. Homosexuals must exhibit the same personalist virtues as heterosexuals. The major question is whether they should be bound to act as heterosexuals.

Now to the question, is a homosexual orientation and consequent homosexual activity merely a different life-style, or is there something inherently wrong with it? There are at least three ways to get at an answer to this question: Scripture; authority; and human reason. Roman Catholics have traditionally tried to bring all three to bear on perplexing moral issues.

SCRIPTURE does not offer much comfort to those who engage in homosexual acts. Although homosexuality holds a very minor place in Scripture and is not mentioned by Jesus or the prophets, some terribly severe judgments are made against it. Leviticus (18:22; 20:13) tells us that active homosexuals should be put to death, a practice renewed in the form of burning at the stake during the late middle ages. Paul tells us that they belong to the class of idolaters (Rom. 1:18-32), and that they shall never enter the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor 6:9-10). It is hard to imagine penalties worse than loss of physical and eternal life.

The basis for these judgments is set out in the early chapters of Genesis. In order to image himself, God made both man and woman. Together, the two sexes mirror God. In order to overcome Adam's loneliness, God created a woman, not another man.

There are two approaches to the Scriptures that Roman Catholics should not take. The first is a fundamentalist attitude that protests, I take everything in the bible "just as it is written." The Catholic tradition has always seen the need for an on-going interpretation and reinterpretation of the Scriptures. That process began in the Scriptures themselves; and it continues today. The promise of the on-going presence of the Spirit is at the same time a command to interpret the Scriptures. The second erroneous approach is to ignore the Scriptures, a tack that is also not acceptable for it would deprive us of the originating inspiration of our historical faith.

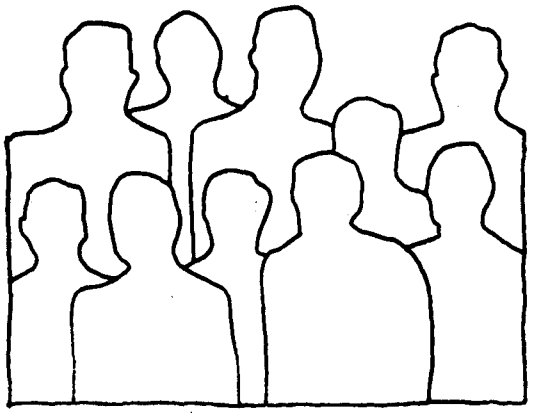
A third approach is to evaluate the scriptural texts even as they judge us. We often discover upon study that they mean something other than what we have always assumed. For example, many scholars think that the sin of Sodom was not primarily homosexuality, but inhospitality, gang rape, and even attempted sexual congress with angels. Some scholars argue that what Scripture really condemns is the promiscuity that so much homosexuality involved. Still other scholars note that the sacred authors were unaware that some people are homosexual in orientation. That is, the scriptural condemnations assume a conscious choice by a heterosexual to exchange a heterosexual partner for a homosexual one. We can make no such assumption today.

Another facet of this third approach is to note the possible cultural relativity of the scriptural judgments. The Scriptures legislate on a whole range of sexual behaviors that we do not consider to be sinful. For a son to see his father naked was tantamount to a crime. For husband and wife to have sexual intercourse during the seven days of her menstrual period meant punishment. Polygamy was permitted, even required. Celibacy was abnormal; bishops were to have only one wife, and so on.

However one interprets these texts, it seems safe to say that our sexual ethic is at least partially different from the one (or, rather, the several) proposed in Scripture. The question returns, are homosexual acts wrong? Has the evolution of culture meant only that people should not be put to death for such acts, just as we no longer stone people caught in adultery? We still judge adultery to be wrong, though we have changed the punishment. Or does it mean that we "enlightened" moderns now see that at least certain cases of homosexual acts are as sinless as the touching of menstrual fluids, an act that once made a person ritually unclean?

In sum, when reading Scripture we see that some typically cited texts do not treat of homosexuality; others do, and do so in a very direct fashion. But are these texts literally valid for us, or are they culturally bound?

Church tradition and ecclesiastical authority have continuously rejected homosexual activity. The first objection raised against homosexual activity was that it was "against nature." This unnaturalness frequently meant that men were acting like women. Women have rather regularly been seen, even by such luminaries as Thomas Aquinas, as naturally inferior to men. Therefore part of the degradation involved in homosexuality was seen to be not so much a degradation of human nature, but a degradation of a man to the level of a woman. Therefore, too, lesbianism has seldom been proscribed in our scripture or our tradition. Male homosexuality, on the other hand, was com-



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monly thought to be a more serious sin than rape, prostitution, or fornication, all of which are "natural."

Homosexuality was also judged sinful because it is not open to procreation. The early Christian tradition showed an uneasiness with sexual passion, and procreation was in many cases thought to be the sole justification for marriage and sexual relations. Hence homosexuality was roundly condemned for being sterile. Only in the late nineteenth century did "expression of interpersonal love" come to be recognized in church teaching as a reason for sexual intercourse.

Within the past five years, church authorities have again taken strong stands against homosexual activity. Yet, at the same time, they have spoken clearly on the human rights of those who have a homosexual orientation. Their message would seem to be that it is all right to be a homosexual, as long as one does not express this orientation genitally.

As with scriptural passages, one can take a fundamentalist attitude or a "who-cares!" attitude toward church tradition and authority on the issue of homosexuality. Neither of these is acceptable. The latter position is untenable for a person who wants to be a member of the church. The former position fails to reckon with some of the dubious reasons given for opposition to homosexuality. Bad reasons, of course, do not invalidate a conclusion; but neither do they make it right. There are a number of significant questions about the church's past attitude toward sexuality that make one wonder whether it too has been culture-bound and ought to be transcended.

MY OWN APPROACH tries to discover the relevant biological, psychological, rational, and religious values. It then tries to weigh these values and make a judgment within an ethics of proportionality. In examining homosexuality, I find myself confronted by Jesus's demand (Lk 12:57) "Why can you not judge for yourselves what is the right course?" Stated briefly, my judgment is this. Homosexual actions are biologically deficient, but they may be psychologically healthy, the best available exercise of one's interpersonal freedom, and may even be a form of authentic Christian spirituality. Let us look at each of these four levels of human existence.

Homosexual couples cannot do, biologically, what heterosexual couples can do, namely, bear children. The significance of that fact should be neither overestimated nor underestimated. I want to argue that to the extent that any sexual activity is closed to children, to that extent it is deficient. It represents a failure to carry out one of the most basic and fulfilling tasks of the human race, namely, to propagate the race.

Homosexual activity also contravenes the complementary aptness of the male and female sexual systems for one another. Again this biological deficiency should be neither overestimated nor ignored. Thus the human race has discouraged homosexuality because stable heterosexual unions are so utterly vital to its survival interests and because of its sense of biological fittingness. We must not ignore these factors.

Secondly, homosexual relations may be psychologically healthy. Various psychological tests show that — apart from the one characteristic of "adequate heterosexual development" — homosexuals are about as healthy as anyone else. Homosexuals take encouragement from such tests because one would expect that, since they have suffered intense discrimination, they would score significantly lower than their heterosexual counterparts. They do not.

Thirdly, persons who are homosexuals are able to function and grow at least as well as heterosexuals. They are able to be creative, put in a hard day's work, act as citizens, help their neighbor, much like heterosexuals. Somewhat surprisingly, they "make love" more humanely, largely because they are better able empathetically to feel what their partner is feeling. With regard to human psyche and mind, human persons are so richly complex that they can often compensate (which need not mean overcompensate) for whatever deficiencies they have on the biological, psychological, or mental levels. We all know, for example, people who have lost a leg and are still great workers and extraordinary human beings. Homosexual activity, however deficient, does not keep homosexuals from human greatness.

Finally, homosexuals can develop a form of authentic Christian spirituality. Their spirituality is, of course, basically like that of heterosexuals. They believe and enact in their lives the Incarnation, Cross, and Resurrection. They live or try to live, consciously dependent on the power of the Spirit. But just as grace, mind, and psyche penetrate their sexual orientation, so also this orientation affects their psyche, mind, and spirit. Whatever is distinctive about their human existence due to their homosexual orientation offers a new possibility for life in the spirit, a possibility that heterosexuals do not have. A number of articles and books have been written to explore this possibility.

"The harvest of the Spirit," Paul tells us (Gal 5:22-23) is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control." Some homosexuals exhibit these qualities as strikingly as any heterosexual. To be sure, we human beings are so complex that we can manifest all these virtues and still be sinful in some aspect of our lives. But abundant evidence of these virtues in many active homosexualals leads one to presume that they are Spirit-filled.

Now, to apply an ethic of proportionality. The God we serve and cooperate with wants to conserve and enhance creation, bringing all things to their greatest possible fullness. A sexual act that helps to continue the human race is good. But the homosexual act is not open to generation, and so to that extent it is deficient. On the other hand, engaging in heterosexual activity can alienate genuinely homosexual persons from themselves at the level of their psyche, mind, and spirit. What they gain at the level of propagation, they lose in authenticity at the other levels of their being. thus, the disproportionate evil of insisting that homosexual persons, if they are going to have sexual relations at all, must have them with persons of the opposite sex, must be assessed.

Should the significant numbers who are homosexual remain permanently single or celibate? Is this a cross they are given by God, to be carried all their adult life? As a personal vocation

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from God, it might well be that they are called to genital non-activity. The desire never to act contrary to certain explicit statements of our Scriptures and tradition may itself constitute such a vocation for some.

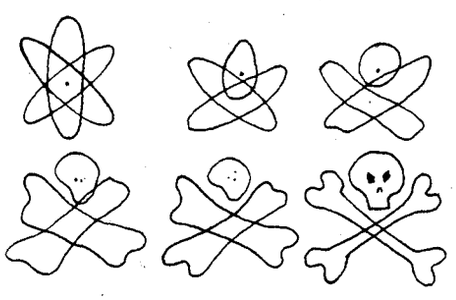
Apart from this personal vocation, it seems a violation of humanness automatically to deprive homosexuals of the values that Christians have found in sexuality. Such values include pleasure, romantic feelings, companionship, mutual support, sexual outlet, ecstacy, intimacy, and interpersonal communication. It seems to compound "unnaturalness" to insist that persons not heterosexually inclined must simply, without further consideration, be sexually inactive. One biological deficiency then turns all too easily into biological, psychological, rational, and spiritual alienation. A homosexual orientation would become synonymous with fate. It is not clear to me that every Christian homosexual is fated to such restrictions on his or her human expressiveness. Put perhaps too simply, if there are positive values in a committed, loving sexual relation, then very strong reasons have to be given why anyone including homosexuals should be denied those positive values. The biological deficiences do not seem in themselves serious enough in our time to justify that denial.

The unknown and the unsuspected usually cause us to be uncomfortable. This is especially so when it deals with our sexual identity. Every one of us spends decades if not a lifetime trying to accept and become comfortable with those "deep dark urges," as they have been called, that pop up to disturb our equilibrium at the most unexpected times. This uncertainty has generated an intense hostility towards homosexuals, far out of proportion to whatever "sin" there may be in homosexual activity and far from the loving response one would expect from Spirit-filled Christians.

The American bishops have made it very clear that all persons deserve great respect, whatever their sexual orientation. No one, merely because of his or her sexual orientation, should be denied housing, jobs, or public office. Since homosexual children generally are reared in heterosexual families, and since, in the studies made thus far, children reared in homosexual environments are as likely to be heterosexual as any other, there seems to be no solid foundation for discrimination.

Finally, since homosexual persons are presently highly discriminated against, they should be especially favored by all Christians. A recent book title asks, "Is the homosexual my neighbor?" Christians who are deeply alive to the parable of the Good Samaritan can only answer yes to that question. Even if someday it becomes crystal clear that homosexual persons should not "make love" to one another, it will always be Christianly clear that we should love our homosexual sisters and brothers.

LIVING ALONG THE LOVE CANAL



Prisoners of place

FREDERICK T. MUTO

THE LOVE CANAL. A chasm divides the words and what they signify, creating a facile and arid irony. Many families are marooned in their chemical wasteland, victims of a sadly familiar legal, bureaucratic, and political stalemate. In a very real sense they are captives, as we all are in some way, of the place in which they were born.

The Canal chains shackled the residents gradually, but steadily, like an unfurling fog. The *Niagara Falls Gazette* first published articles in the spring of 1978 describing the grisly health problems caused by chemicals dumped many years before in the Canal. Residents organized and discovered a pattern of miscarriages, birth defects, and respiratory ailments in their neighborhoods. A long, still unsatisfied, struggle to escape their chemical cage began.

I write this three thousand physical, although far fewer psychic, miles from the Love Canal. For twenty-two years I lived less than five miles from the ditch into which Hooker Chemical & Plastics Corp. poured tons of toxic chemicals. The chemicals didn't begin percolating to the surface until after I had moved to another state. But my family and many friends have stayed in Niagara Falls.

As national attention focused on the Canal, I read of the legal skirmishes and reports of chromosome damage and other maladies with a confused blend of empathy, distance, and foreboding. On a conscious level, I thought I was too removed, in space and in time, to be personally threatened by any of the revelations. Nor did I fear for my family. I was reassured to find a similar disarming complacency among my friends in Niagara Falls when I visited there or spoke with them on the telephone. Fear was absent from their voices. Instead I consistently sensed a certitude that the tragedy was happening to someone else, in a faraway place. A belief, probably unexamined, fed the certitude: the danger is restricted to the few blocks immediately surrounding the Canal. More than once I

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listened, hardly trusting my ears, as a friend criticized the local newspaper and the Love Canal Homeowners' Association for the mess *they* had created by publicizing the residents' plight.

The foreboding I felt about the Canal was, I now think, rooted in the distance I had traveled from Niagara Falls. People outside the city see and assess the Canal's danger in different ways from those within it. My friends in Southern California can't understand why there hasn't been a great diaspora from Niagara Falls—to nearly any place else. Most are convinced that anyone who lives there will in some way be physically affected by the chemicals. They think it pathological that the people in the neighborhood immediately surrounding the Canal could have clung so stubbornly, and for so long, to their worthless homes.

WHY SUCH radically differing perceptions between natives and outsiders? I've composed a litany of likely reasons, which I patiently recite to each new inquisitor. Most residents simply don't, in their own eyes, live near enough to any of the dumpsites (there are at least three others within the city) to be threatened by them. Niagarans perceive an invisible, but very real, geographic boundary around the contaminated area. Until recently, I reflexively seconded their instincts. Now I'm no longer so confident. The continuing revelations, which seem to explode in clusters, must cause even the most thick-skinned of residents some concern. In a $124 million lawsuit brought by the federal government, Hooker admitted the chemical wastes may eventually leach towards the Niagara River. The company also admitted it has discovered "an area of contaminated soil" on the grounds of a local Water Treatment Plant. Although chemical traces have been found in the local water supply, city officials insist the water is safe. Whether they are right or not, this is hardly the stuff of restful sleep and a sanguine future.

A year and a half ago, as Love Canal courted notoriety, a friend earnestly asked me whether my family was all right. At the time, the question amused me. I assured him my family was fine. Voicing the sentiment of a native, I glibly told him that every one of my relatives lived at least four miles from the Canal, a considerable distance in a city the size of Niagara Falls. "Will you be tested for chromosome damage if you and your wife decide to have children?" another friend asked. Of course not, I retorted, offended by her alarmism. I wondered how intelligent people could ask such silly questions. But as time passed, these and kindred questions nurtured the seedling doubts I had. That's the torment and tragedy of the Love Canal. Much of the harm can't be seen or won't appear for years, perhaps for a generation. As one Canal mother said of the shadows in her son's uncertain future: "I can see Michael have a convulsion; I can see him turn yellow from a liver disorder. It's what I can't see that frightens me. It's not knowing what may develop in the future."

Nevertheless, my ingrained notion that few residents will be directly affected by the Canal isn't shed easily. I clumsily continue explaining the attitude of Niagarans to my friends in California with a primitive economic analysis. Chemical in-

dustries form the backbone of the local economy, and are the primary source of jobs. If the plants were to wither and die, the city might respond in kind. The instinct of economic self-preservation prevents people from destroying their own livelihood. Trumpeting the Canal crisis is, for many residents, tantamount to financial suicide.

My California friends aren't impressed. I shift to something I think is pivotal. Niagarans are anchored by personal economics and bonded by familial ties to their city. This not only makes them want to stay but also, quite naturally, causes them to cast their home in the most favorable light possible. We all want to like the places we live in.

My friends aren't persuaded. I try to think of parallels in their own lives and seize upon the earthquakes endemic to my adopted state. Niagarans have lived in the midst of chemical plants all their lives. Constant exposure to their dangers over the years has given the residents a partial immunity—from an enervating fear of chemicals, if not from their effects. In California people don't brood endlessly in anticipation of the next tremor. A scant few seriously talk of moving because of earthquakes. In Niagara Falls, people have acclimated in a similar way to the dangers chemical plants present. Two types of distance make extraordinary dangers livable: actual physical distance and, where that is impossible, psychological distance. People everywhere develop devices to diminish the specter of a danger they are compelled by circumstance to live with and confront daily. What varies is their relative freedom—economic, personal or otherwise—to separate themselves from the source of that danger.

Memories from my childhood years in Niagara Falls illustrate the need to acclimate. When I was in high school, occasional chlorine leaks at one of the local plants would temporarily force the cordoning off of several square city blocks. In retrospect, such leaks frighten and amaze me. At the time I thought of them, if at all, as part of the given order of urban industrial life. A friend who worked at one of the plants regularly had to don an oxygen mask to protect himself from an escaping gas or vapor. Another friend worked one college summer replacing pipe that was systematically eaten away by the chemicals it carried. His crew's task was akin to the continual painting of the Golden Gate Bridge: once the last pipe was replaced, they began again at pipe one.

Only novel or unfamiliar threats trigger great change. Several hometown acquaintances contorted their faces in mock agony when I first told them I had moved to California. "Do

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you want to die in an earthquake?" they asked. I gave the question its only possible answer: No, I certainly do not. Yet I plan to move to San Francisco soon, knowing that many seismologists predict a major earthquake will devastate that area within the next ten years. I'll work with hundreds of bright, educated people in a skyscraper built on landfill, a particularly vulnerable place to be during a quake. Nearly all of the people could live elsewhere, but choose not to. A measure of denial is a salutary, perhaps essential, grease for the wheels of daily life.

THERE ARE other, less concrete reasons families haven't withdrawn en masse from Niagara Falls. As in most parts of the world, self and familial identity become wedded over the years to a sense of place, to the particulars and intangibles of a given area. People refuse to be torn from the homes of their parents. We steel ourselves readily against external threats; it's from the internal ones we flee. Although our mobile times and culture belittle the notion, attachment to a community still exercises a powerful spell over most people.

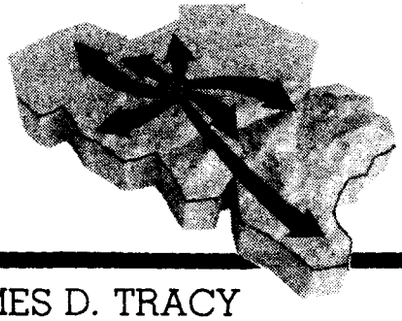
All of this fails to explain why the Canal residents, those perched directly on top of the cauldron of caustic chemicals, have stayed as long as they have in the contaminated area. They face a Hobson's choice. For most of them, their homes represent a lifetime of labor. Many have children who are particularly susceptible to the health hazards generated by the Canal. They can't remain where they are, but can't afford to leave. Parents must choose between jettisoning their family's financial security and imperiling their children's health. Does the choice seem simple? We might all think we can make the correct one, but the answer could only be simple to those who aren't constrained by limited resources and who needn't worry about their family's economic survival.

The bureaucratic and legal battles chug along with the Canal People, prisoners of place, sinking in the mire of political inertia. Future revelations may swell their numbers. As a lawyer, I understand the defenses to legal responsibility raised by Hooker, the Niagara County Attorney, New York State, and the federal government. But I can't understand the blanket reluctance of these institutions to address the immediate threat to the residents. Rather than acting to defuse the threat, each institution instinctively scurried for refuge under the first available legal rock. Not one appeared to consider whether it might have a moral responsibility extending beyond its potential legal liability.

Maybe I've begun to fear that dioxin or one of its isomers will someday threaten my family and friends. Perhaps they already do. Three years ago my mother died of cancer at a very young age. I'm not yet willing to believe she would be alive today had there been no chemical plants in Niagara Falls. I remind myself that cancer predates the modern chemical industry. But the doubts are haunting and persistent.

My family is still in Niagara Falls, and I remain confused about the Love Canal. Although a visceral feeling tells me they will be fine, the accumulated body of disclosures worries me. The long-term effects of chemical wastes are unknown and unforeseeable, and cloud the future of all Niagarans. Where we live helps give form to our human finitude, but we must make choices within the limits of that form. For all those whose capacity to choose is constricted, for whatever reasons, psychological distance is a necessary balm. I fervently hope my family, my friends and most Niagarans are physically far enough away from the Canal to escape the gruesome limits it has imposed on the lives of some residents. My mind resists considering the alternatives. I think the residents have the same problem.

HOW ADAPTABLE ARE DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS?



Does Belgium have a future?

JAMES D. TRACY

IN A QUIET WAY that becomes its lack of nationalist fervor, the kingdom of Belgium is now celebrating its 150th anniversary. To symbolize the union between Dutch-speaking Flanders and French-speaking Wallonia, a flotilla of barges made its way in June along the major rivers of both regions. Some noted, however, that the Scheldt and the Meuse are not connected by nature, but only by the artifice of a canal; as if to underscore the point, nationalist parties of both language groups flatly refused, each for separate reasons, to participate in the sesquicentennial festivities. In effect, many Belgians are asking themselves whether Belgium has a future.

In the English language press, conflict between Belgium's two nationalities is usually treated with a fair degree of ignorance, and occasional sophomoric humor (the London *Economist*, in discussing the possibility of a land bridge between England and France, suggested moving the Flemings to

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Holland and the Walloons to France, so that "unhappy Belgium" could be scooped into the Channel for landfill). But Belgium deserves a better hearing, if for no other reason than because the coexistence of distinct nationalities within a single state poses a critical test for the viability of democratic institutions. In fact, Flemings and Walloons are closer than ever to an amicable solution of their long-standing differences—except, that is, for the problem of Brussels.

BELGIUM ASSERTED its independence by rejecting a brief union with the Netherlands. Since French had been spreading rapidly among the upper classes of Flanders in consequence of the preceding Napoleonic occupation, the founding fathers all spoke French, and they assumed their country would be unified culturally through a gradual disappearance of the Netherlandish dialects spoken in its northern half. Instead, Flemish culture was revived by the Flemish Movement, one of whose early achievements was the adoption of Literary Dutch as the written language of Flanders. The drive for cultural autonomy gained popular support in the wake of World War I, in which Flemish doughboys had four long years in the trenches of West Flanders to ponder the fact that their officer corps spoke only French.

Hence during the inter-war years education in Flanders was thoroughly "Dutchified" (except for the renowned Université Catholique de Louvain, located in the Flemish town of Leuven); following World War II, the new Dutch-speaking elite produced by these schools aggressively recruited the foreign investment which has endowed Flanders with an impressively diverse and still prosperous industrial economy, even as the coal and steel industries of Wallonia were entering a seemingly irreparable decline. At the same time, Flanders has steadily increased its traditional demographic edge, thus sustaining the political clout of its perennial majority party, the Christian Democrats. Hence in the sixties, Flemish opinion was strong enough to force through two major legal changes of which the memory is still painful to many French-speaking Belgians: the "bounding" of Brussels, preventing the largely francophone city's further expansion into Flemish Brabant, and splitting the University of Louvain, with the francophone section moving out of Leuven to a new campus twenty miles south.

Still, Flemings have not quite shaken off the combative sense of inferiority instilled in their forebears during the period when the Flemish people were presumed not even to have a culture worthy of the name. Wiser heads among Flemish politicians—notably the current premier, Wilfried Martens, former party chief of the Flemish Christian Democrats—seem fully aware that Flanders must be prepared for concessions to forestall legitimate Walloon fears about a "tyranny of the majority." But Flemings as individuals naturally resent the inequalities which result (e.g., hiring at certain levels of the civil service must be on a 50/50 basis, despite the fact that Flemings outnumber Walloons by about six to four).

Despite such feelings, most Flemings do not favor an independent Flanders. Apart from the solid practical reasons for not dismantling a national framework which generally functions quite well, and is not altogether bereft of sentimental attachments, separatist opinion is severely handicapped by the fact that its most vociferous exponents are found among splinter groups whose private stock of bazookas and Nazi insignia betrays their ideological descent from extreme nationalists who collaborated with German occupation forces during two World Wars. (A few months ago a few hundred of them made themselves typically obnoxious by hooting at the King and Queen on their sesquicentennial visit to Antwerp, on the same weekend when even non-soccer fans huddled in front of their TV sets to watch Belgium's unheralded Red Devils give the top-rated Germans a good run for Europe's national-team championship.)

Instead, public opinion in Flanders supports the idea of endowing both major regions with some of the attributes of self-government, including limited powers of taxation and budget control. A federal solution to Belgium's problems has long been advocated by regional enthusiasts, but each of the major parties had reasons for opposing such schemes. Walloon Socialists were reluctant to consign their northern colleagues to permanent minority status in Flanders, while Flemish Christian Democrats had similar apprehensions on behalf of their confrères in Wallonia, with its perennial Socialist pluralities; the Liberals were and are more identified with national unity than any other party, and, in the seventies, were last to follow suit by splitting into two separate parties. But divisive issues of the sixties gave a strong impetus to parties based purely on language—the *Rassemblement Wallon*, the *Voksunie*, and, in Brussels, the *Front Démocratique des Francophones*, or FDF—and hence persuaded the major parties to move with the times by adopting, in 1970, a constitutional amendment providing for the creation of three regions, with Brussels-capital, with a special bilingual status, being the third.

In a kind of emerging national mythology, Flemings attribute their region's postwar prosperity not to the mere fact of foreign investment, but to old-fashioned virtues of thrift and hard work—and the resulting stable labor climate—which attract foreign investment. Vague feelings of this kind were recently given some credence in a highly-publicized study by two economics professors at the Katholieke Universiteit te Leuven, demonstrating that Wallonia in recent years has had a lower productivity index and a lower savings-to-income ratio, as well as a negative balance of payments and disproportionately high social service costs—both of which were covered by the foreign earnings of Flemish industry.

Even in regard to a prospective regionalization, the wing of the Flemish Christian Democratic party whose free-enterprise economic instincts are in tune with those of the Liberals—and whose editorial voice is the influential daily *De Standaard*—have been loath to contemplate any scheme that would allow a Socialist-controlled Wallonia to draw on national (and ultimately Flemish) tax revenues to finance job-saving investments in moribund industries. One of the several crises during Premier Martens's first government last fall and winter was brought about when a Flemish Christian Democratic party

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congress, led by chairman and ex-premier Leo Tindemans, attacked current regionalization plans as lacking sufficient guarantees that an autonomous Walloon entity would be forced to foot the bill for its own economic experiments.

But the regionalization plan proposed by Martens's second coalition government, and adopted into law by the Belgian Parliament in August, envisions immediate fiscal responsibility for the two major regions, with supplementary central-government subsidies. Thus Flemings should have the freedom of maneuver to nurture along according to their own lights one of Europe's *wirtschaftswunders*, while, now that the Liberals have joined the Christian Democrats and the Socialists in coalition—comfortably providing the two-thirds majority necessary for implementing regionalization—all three major parties together should have a breathing space from "communal" to linguistic issues, in which to address the formidable economic problems that face all industrial democracies.

WALLOON OPINION on Belgium's linguistic problems is guided by a national myth of long standing. Apart from occasional zealots for literature in the Walloon dialect, Walloons think of themselves as regional carriers of a world civilization. Indeed, while there are many good Flemish writers, not to mention their Dutch counterparts, it is a bit unfair to compare Dutch literature with what is available in French. Accordingly, and despite the obligatory second-national-language requirement in Belgian schools, Walloons are about as willing to learn Dutch as Americans are to learn any foreign language, no matter what. (Flemish ability to pick up French is, of course, a very different story; but, sensing the political implications of this inequality, younger Flemings in certain situations now make a point of refusing to switch over to French.)

For Walloons, the corollary of this supreme confidence in French culture is that it will naturally spread of its own attractive power—to the extent it is not impeded by linguistic laws (there are, unfortunately, otherwise intelligent Walloons who still cherish the notion that French would conqueer Flanders were it not for the fact that crucial state aid is provided only for Dutch-speaking schools). From these premises Walloons conclude that theirs is the culture of the individual seeking his own level, while Flemings are more prone to a "germanic" group solidarity; Flemings, too, tend to see themselves as more "community-minded" than the "individualistic" Walloons, although a moment's reflection (e.g., the francophone Quebecois) might suggest that group solidarity has nothing to do with language, but quite a lot to do with the historical experience of being dominated by another culture. In any case, middle-class francophone opinion, which has its own reasons for being dubious about the prospect of a Socialist-controlled Wallonia, is less than whole-hearted in its enthusiasm for federalist reforms, since in its view francophone cultural interests are served quite well by the existing unitary state.

But one of the minor paradoxes of Belgian politics is that sentiment for regional autonomy, which in Flanders is a rallying-cry among conservatives, has traditionally been strongest among left-wing politicians in Wallonia—a circumstance which may trace back to the anti-state, Proudhonian influence in late nineteenth-century Walloon Socialism. Certainly the most articulate Walloon proponents of the newly adopted "reform of the state" have been found among the so-called Bastin-Yerna group, a coalition of French-speaking Socialists and left-wing Christian Democrats. A fair sample of this view is the French version (1978) of a doctoral thesis at Wisconsin by sociologist Michel Quévit, now at the Université Catholique de Louvain.

Quévit's particular target is the investment policy of what the London *Economist* has called Belgium's "fuddy-duddy holding companies"—notably the Société Général de Banque, whose parent bank controls one-third of the nation's private savings—which are still dominated by a francophone elite, much as U.S. bank directorates are perhaps the last bastion of WASP ascendancy. Following World War II, Quévit argues, these firms shifted their capital to more promising new industries in the north, thus abandoning the region that had produced their original profits. As for the argument that Flemish industry is more productive because of old-fashioned virtues still to be found among the Flemish people, other Walloon writers have made the telling point that Wallonia's demographic structure—more old people, and workers with more seniority—might well account for the differences in social expenditures, and in productivity as a function of labor costs. Hence the conclusion is that a semi-autonomous Wallonia might well redress the economic balance by giving the local population some control over (among other things) investment policy.

Whether a leftward-leaning Wallonia and a Flanders oriented more toward free enterprise can harmonize their interests on monetary policy and other matters is a question that troubles observers on both sides of the linguistic frontier. But limited regional autonomy, with crucial issues still at the determination of the national parliament, will at least give each region limited freedom to experiment with options according to its own liking. The immediate obstacle, and one that must be surmounted if any reform of the Belgian state is to endure, is the question of Brussels.

HISTORICALLY a Flemish city, Flemish still in its architecture and in the names of its people, Brussels began to be "Frenchified" with the Napoleonic occupation, if not before, depending on whether one reads historians writing in Dutch or in French. In connection with the city's millennium last year, the francophone section of the Ministry of Culture sponsored an exhibit ("1,000 years' Radiation of French Culture") riddled with scandalous historical inaccuracies in regard to the medieval period, as *De Standaard* pointed out in an appropriately scathing review. Yet from the time that French Jansenist exiles found refuge here in the eighteenth century, the city has by degrees built up its literary reputation as "la ville plus norde de la francité."

At present it is impossible to tell how many Flemings there are among its million inhabitants (one-fourth foreigners),

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partly because there has been no linguistic item in the censuses since 1947 (in consequence of Flemish grievances about the biased nature of the questions), and partly because it is difficult to classify a shopkeeper or railway worker who speaks *Brussels Vlaams* with chums on the job, and French with customers, but little or no Literary Dutch. (If Flemings are in the ascendant economically, one has the impression there are still workingclass Flemings in Brussels who will believe it when they see it, and in the meantime, hope to increase their children's chances by enrolling them in francophone schools.) Francophone estimates, based on school enrollments, put the total at fifteen percent, or about 150,000. Flemish sources, using recent voting behavior, arrive at a figure of thirty percent of the native population, or about 250,000.

In any event, it is clear that none of the city's nineteen communes has a Flemish majority, and that the Flemish population is constantly exposed to a more or less blatant cultural discrimination, since there is nowhere a local constitutency strong enough to demand enforcement of linguistic parity laws long since put on the books by the national government. Hospitals are legally required to have a bilingual staff, but a patient brought in from the surrounding Flemish countryside will likely as not find himself having to describe obscure symptoms in French. At a different level, Flemish professionals working in Brussels often prefer to live outside the city limits merely to spare their families unpleasantness (e.g., a businessman who transferred his residence to Ostend so his children could grow up without having to be self-conscious about being Flemish, or a doctor who moved outside the city limits after swastikas were painted on his door).

In return, communes just beyond the limits tend to be fiercely Flemish, with a cold shoulder to foreigners who speak French (English is preferable), and signs urging residents to *spreek steeds uw taal te Brussels*—always speak your language in Brussels). The Polish corridor of Belgium's linguistic conflict is a single row of Flemish communes that separates Brussels from the Walloon part of Brabant to the south, notably St. Ginesius-Rode, since, francophones say, the newer section along the road to the commune of (French-speaking, despite its name) Waterloo is entirely francophone, which would make Brussels a "peninsula" rather than an "island" surrounded by Flemish Brabant.

According to the constitutional reforms of 1970, the Flemish minority in Brussels was to be guaranteed parity in a metropolitan council, just as the Walloon minority in the country were guaranteed parity in the number of ministerial posts. The latter provision has been strictly observed, but the Brussels metropolitan council election of 1971 was so controversial that there has to this day never been another election: many of the "Flemish" candidates elected were people who, if Flemish by birth, were clearly francophone by cultural preference. As recently as the Flemish Christian Democratic party congress last winter this incident was cited as proof that francophone promises cannot be trusted (to which francophones replied that the congress's rejection of regionalization plans previously approved by the Flemish Christian Democrats was proof of Flemish perfidy).

Well, we wouldn't go that far . . . But we do* urge *you to give* Commonweal *for Christmas. See back cover.

So long as the militant francophone *Front Démocratique des Francophones* retains its majority standing among Brussels voters, there seems in truth no way to provide for the Flemish minority in an autonomous Brussels region sufficient guarantees to satisfy the Flemish majority in the national parliament. Wilfried Martens's first government was constructed as a coalition of leading parties in each of the three projected regions—Christian Democrats for Flanders, Socialists for Wallonia, and the FDF for Brussels—but the FDF quit the coalition rather than accept changes demanded by the Flemish Christian Democratic party congress last winter, and the government subsequently fell for want of the necessary two-thirds majority when a handful of Flemish Christian Democrats defected on the crucial vote for regionalization (they objected because two francophone parliament members living outside Brussels would have been allotted seats in the Brussels regional assembly, thus calling in question the Flemish status of communes outside the city).

Recently, however, the FDF has been on the wane. Along with other language-issue parties, it lost credit last fall when its leaders chose to display themselves prominently on the scene while Flemish and Walloon extremist groups had a good bash at each other during "demonstrations" in the linguistically troubled Voer region. A few months later, when FDF officials made their umpteenth threat to quit the coalition, Premier Martens decided to show them the door. During the spring, a planned non-partisan rally to protest the treatment of Brussels by the new government fizzled when it became clear the FDF was hoping to use the occasion for its own ends (the tip-off was a large run of rally posters in unmistakable FDF magenta). In general, election results of the past few years suggest that voters are waking up to the fact that language-issue parties like the FDF and the *Volksunie* have essentially nothing to say about the country's economic problems, and can only thrive by exploiting communal tensions.

In these circumstances, the current coalition ingeniously proposed to move ahead where agreement seemed possible, while putting the whole question of Brussels temporarily "into the refrigerator." New regional institutions for Flanders and Wallonia are to be established at once, and a plan for Brussels—including a new framework for metropolitan council elections—is to be devised by the end of 1982. The plan has not been well-received among francophone *Bruxellois*—e.g., the protest rally that fizzled—but in Wallonia it seems to have

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evoked feelings that Wallonia and Flanders can, after all, get along with each other. Success in this first stage of regionalization could well produce a momentum for resolving the problems of Brussels, especially since the present coalition seems fairly stable (Walloon Socialists are not happy with the austerity demands of their new Liberal partners, but they are deeply committed to and are shy of provoking new elections, whose result could well be a replay of an earlier Christian Democratic-Liberal coalition led by Leo Tindemans). Moreover, Wilfried Martens seems well-suited to the task at hand, since, as premier, his fidelity to stated commitments has earned him among francophone Belgians a respect which nicely complements his earlier reputation—tracing as far back as "Flemish Day" at the 1957 Brussels World's Fair—as an effective organizer of Flemish interests.

Belgium is far from being the only European state shared by different ethnic groups, nor is it the only one whose component nationalities have been able to compose their differences without ever resorting to war between themselves (witness Switzerland, whose multi-ethnic tensions seem easily enough contained within a long-established federal structure). But it is the only country now attempting to provide breathing space for its diverse nationalities by federalist reform of a hitherto unitary state; its success or failure in this regard could have a good deal to say about the future of regionalist movements in half a dozen other European countries. Belgium's internal conflicts have made the Belgians natural mediators in Europe's larger rivalries, and it will be a good omen for the continuing adaptability of Europe's democratic institutions if the current government can indeed pull off the trick of creating a framework to satisfy the often conflicting aspirations of Flemings and Walloons; for Belgium itself, it would be a splendid way to mark the sesquicentennial.

Recordings

SHUMSKY IN HIS PRIME

A NATURALNESS & INNATE RIGHTNESS

AMONG THE GREATEST pleasures afforded the inveterate record buyer and concertgoer is the discovery of extraordinary artists little known to the general public. One such artist is the Philadelphia-born violinist Oscar Shumsky. Palpable proof of his achievement may be found on his latest recording, the complete Bach Sonatas and Partitas for Unaccompanied Violin (MHS 4032-34, available by mail order only through Musical Heritage Society, 14 Park Road, Tinton Falls, New Jersey 07724).

These pieces constitute one of the touchstones of the violinist's repertoire; virtually every renowned violinist of the past century has recorded at least excerpts from Bach's masterpiece. To single out one version as "the best" is foolishness verging on insanity. Suffice it to say that Shumsky's contribution need defer to no one's, that it presents its own unique outlook and perceptions.

Place any side of the Shumsky album on your turntable. Immediately, even with casual attention, one is struck by the violinist's sheer beauty of tone. In all registers and at all dynamic levels it possesses a vibrancy unmatched by any active violinist known to me. It brings to mind the legendary Russian violinists of eras past, in particular Mischa Elman and Jascha Heifetz, both of whom—not so incidentally—studied with Leopold Auer, Shumsky's own teacher (then, too, Shumsky is of Russian parentage.).

Yet reveling in gorgeous sound for its own sake plays no part in Shumsky's musical aesthetic. His tonal suavity is allied with a formidable technique, a pervasive rhythmic animation, and a peerless ability to color sound, to coax a seemingly infinite variety of shadings from his 1715 "Rode" Stradivarius. There is an unforced quality, a naturalness to Shumsky's playing, an innate rightness about tempo, accents, articulation, phrasing. With Shumsky one never gives a second thought to such matters; one's attention is always directed toward the music.

Bach's sonatas and partitas represent the most intellectually rigorous violin music ever written, and Shumsky is able to clarify, as few of his colleagues ever have, the knotty contrapuntal complexities and imposing architecture of these works (listen especially to his rendering of the monumental Ciaconna of the D minor Partita). But Shumsky can hardly be termed an intellectual violinist. Indeed, the most appealing facet of his interpretive personality is its warmth and spontaneity. Everything is fresh. Many artists, even superb ones, work out an interpretation so carefully that it becomes virtually chiseled in granite. Not Shumsky. While one is always conscious of an overriding conception, Shumsky's sense of structure is so firmly established that details can be left to the dictates of the moment. He can interject a new inflection here, a distinctive color there (hear the delicious hesitation at the beginning of the Siciliana from the G minor Sonata, and the marvelous contrast of registers he achieves throughout this piece). Never does he repeat himself. Rather, Shumsky projects a rapturous delight in continually discovering new beauties in this familiar music (note the different character Shumsky imparts to the repeats of the Allemande opening the B minor Partita). And by so doing he enables his listeners to rediscover the music for themselves; it is virtually impossible to listen passively. Shumsky not only fulfills our vision of a piece, he reveals insights we never even imagined. This is supreme artistry.

Then why is Shumsky not even listed in *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* or the *International Who's Who*? Why has he made so few recordings? (His first major album in the stereo era was the miraculous 1978 release, also for Musical Heritage Society, of the complete Mozart violin sonatas.) Why is he not better known? It is partly his choice. Shumsky was a genuine prodigy. He began studying the violin when he was three. At eight he performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski; within a few years he had

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also appeared as soloist with the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, and Baltimore Symphony. His distinguished teachers were Leopold Auer and Efrem Zimbalist. At nineteen he was appointed solo violinist for NBC Radio; two years later he was hand-picked by Toscanini to play in the fabled NBC Symphony. Certainly by the time he was twenty-one Shumsky lacked neither accomplishment nor recognition. Yet he eschewed the frenetic pace of an international solo career, preferring to teach (which he has done with notable success at Curtis, Peabody, Juilliard, and Yale); conduct; study; raise a family (Eric, the younger of his two sons, is a violist; together, father and son have recorded the Mozart Duos, a release due out next year on the Spectrum label); and occasionally perform. A fascinating interview with Shumsky, replete with a remarkable series of photographs chronicling his career, may be found in *The Way They Play, Book 7*, by Samuel Applebaum and Henry Roth (available from the Musical Heritage Society); a discography and complementary interview, by Eric Wen and myself, as well as my review of his aforementioned Mozart Sonata album, is contained in the June 1978 issue of *Record Review*.

Shumsky is now sixty-three. But unlike his contemporaries Isaac Stern (sixty) and Yehudi Menuhin (sixty-four), Shumsky's playing shows no signs of decline; in fact, on the basis of recorded evidence he is now very much in his prime. Eloquence, nobility, passion, lyricism: these qualities can be heard on Shumsky's albums and in his concert appearances in sovereign measure. The question to ask now is not "Why isn't he better-known?" but "How can we get him to record and concertize more?" Let us encourage and proselytize now, rather than wait, then complain—too late—of what might have been.

DERRICK HENRY

(Derrick Henry is completing a dissertation for Yale University on the music of Heinrich Schütz. For three years he served as classical editor of Record Review; *currently he reviews records for* High Fidelity *and* Keynote *magazines.)*

FANTASY REPRESENTS AN ESCAPE INTO REALITY

The jam pot & the *lembas*

CHARLES A. BRADY

Fantasy . . . is, I think, not a lower but a higher form of Art, indeed the most nearly pure form, and so (when achieved) the most potent.
—J.R.R. Tolkien in
On Fairy-Stories

ONE OF THE GREATER SURPRISES of our surprising day has been the return of the fairies, the High Fairies more especially, those "vital, energetic, willful, passionate beings," to use C.S. Lewis's phrase for them, those creatures of "hard, bright, and vividly material splendor." Bishop Corbet was several centuries premature when, in the early 1600s, he bade those Others, "Farewell, rewards and fairies." He, who had attributed their retreat to the rationalizing constriction of the Reformation, would be highly gratified to know that his own and Lewis's Ecclesia Anglicana in concert with Tolkien's Mother Church of Rome—two fairy godmothers in this particular context—have been prime agents of the great return. If ours is really the age of the Holy Spirit's *luce intellectual piena d'amore*—"intellectual light filled with love." as Dante has it in his *Commedia*—that consummation, so far at least, may be found more in fantasy than in philosophy.

Fantasy, of course, is an ambivalent term. What is it, at bottom? On its highest level, it is the *Paradiso's alta fantasia*: man's "high imagination" at its purest, as one finds it in the *Odyssey*, the Sixth Book of the *Aeneid*, *The Tempest*, *The Magic Flute*—Mozart's music, that is, for the libretto is by no means altogether satisfactory—Wagner's Ring, Andersen's *Snow Queen*, Macdonald's *At the Back of the North Wind*, *The Jungle Books*, *The Lord of the Rings*, the seven *Narnia* books.

Fantasy is the testament of the Others: of the gods and heroes; of the *Longaevi*, the Long-Lived Ones, as Martianus Capella called the fauns and nymphs; of the Bright Elves; of the *Sîdhe*. It is one kind of essential reality viewed through the lens of *mythos*, not of *logos*, because, as *Genesis* demonstrates, some realities are too big to be seen in any other way. It is the dimension of the timeless glimpsed in time; of destiny—the word fairy, always remember, derives from *fatum*; and, in the end, of the fulfillment of that strongest of all primordial desires, the desire of immortality.

I have stressed those roots of fantasy which inhere in the imagination of Western and Northern paganism most particularly for the simple reason that Lewis's and Tolkien's overt Christianity, however masked in *The Lord of the Rings*, may lead one to a false conclusion about the nature of the modality their work embodies. It is true that a great deal of the appeal of Tolkien's *Ring* is that its basic images of the cosmic struggle and of man's part therein reflect, without most readers realizing it, the Judaeo-Christian schema of the universe. Behind everything else, in this superb fairy epic, trembles a constant intimation of immortality. Nevertheless, the ancient Celts had an even stronger concept of survival after death than either the Jews or the Egyptians—and Gauls from the Loire

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had brought it into the Middle East 350 years before the birth of Christ. Athens will forever remain the capital of man's mind: Jerusalem of his soul; Rome of his governmental institutions. But it is the Celtic West, buttressed by the Northland of the *Eddas*, which stays the highest citadel of his imagination.

It should not be assumed, by the way, that there was any abiding hiatus in fantasy writing between Shakespeare's day and the 1940s when Lewis and Tolkien began their rise. In fact, if the 18th century could be fairly described as a wasteland in this regard, the period that stretches from 1800 to 1914 might almost be termed the golden age of fantasy for both letterpress and illustration, containing, as it does, the German romanticists, the great European folktale collections, Hans Andersen, George Macdonald, James Barrie, Rudyard Kipling, and such master portraitists of faëry as Walter Crane and Arthur Rackham. There were, naturally, higher and lower levels of critical regard. Consider the reputations of the three oddly assorted Magi who stand behind the varieties of fantasy we know today: that white-bearded Presbyterian Hesiod, George Macdonald; that votary of assorted white goddesses, Sir Henry Rider Haggard; and—least regarded but, possibly, most influential of all—that bespectacled American charioteer of the archetypes beginning with his Adam-Tarzan, Edgar Rice Burroughs.

The staple accusation against fantasy is that it represents an escape from reality. Quite to the contrary, fantasy of the highest order represents escape *into* reality of a different and, often, of a most significant sort. It can also, on occasion, involve a sinister lapse into decadence—after all, there are bad as well as good fairies; and, if C.S. Lewis's *eldila* have refurbished the angelic ikon and rendered it once again plausible, the contemporary cinema has elevated the Prince of This World to Emperor of the Cosmos. For, in the new Gothic of the flicks, Lucifer *always* wins the last round.

Another distinct danger is peculiarly of our day. In Mircea Eliade's words, mythic narrative, by abolishing "profane time," causes "the narrator and his readers" to be "rapt into sacred and mythic time." The reverse is true of much contemporary *fantasia*—and fantasia is a very different thing from fantasy. Far from reposing on the special objective reality of fantasy, fantasia tends to be totally subjective and to produce a dithyramb of guff, a surrealistic extravaganza of image and idea akin to a good deal of contemporary painting and growing out of the trend towards epistemological collapse which marks the modern imagination. All too often a reader gets the sensation nowadays that Baudelaire's devil of ennui is puffing a mouthful of hallucinatory smoke from his infernal hookah straight into the reader's face and sending him on a meaningless "trip." Joyce was a genius, and got away with it—perhaps but barely in *Finnegan*. I do not think the future is going to judge that either John Barth or Donald Barthelme have, in the last analysis, pulled off the trick.

I do not wish to claim too much for fantasy. Since man is a union of body and soul ever striving to be a unity thereof, his art, too, is characteristically mixed. Really to succeed, fantasy must achieve pure imagination. *Hamlet* and *Anna Karenina*, to single out but two of literature's mixed masterpieces, would not be the towering successes they are if they were as "pure" as, say, *The Ancient Mariner* or *Comus*. In a word, too much of Tolkien's *lembas*, the elf-bread that helped sustain Frodo Baggins and his high company, can cloy the palate. It is always necessary to correct the diet now and then with deep drafts of such honest beer of everyday as Trollope brews or, to come to our own day, as C.P. Snow.

There can be no doubt that it was Lewis and Tokien who renewed the fonts of contemporary fantasy for us. Now that they have followed Hobbit Frodo to the Grey Havens, have there been inheritors of the "glass of Galadriel" that softly lights their books? Many, actually. Even, perhaps, a shade too many. Good inheritors like Ursula Le Guin and Lloyd Alexander. Mediocre imitators whose names it is unnecessary to mention.

In his seminal essay, "On Fairy-Stories," Dr. Tolkien spoke of fantasy's satisfaction of "certain primordial human desires," one of these being "to hold communion with other living things." The Eastern tradition is more concerned with animal empathy than the Western—the *Jataka's* Birth Tales of the Buddha are a case in point. (I do not count Aesop; his animals are stalking-horses for pointing human morals.) Rudyard Kipling cut his milk-teeth on the *Jatakas*; and no one in any tradition has ever surpassed his work in the two *Jungle Books*. A book of our day, however, comes close to equaling it: Richard Adams's long rabbit *Odyssey*-and-*Iliad* conjoined, *Watership Down*. This saga of coney life has bred the inevitable imitators. "Cross-bred" would be a better description of the most recent of these, this spring's *Duncton Wood* (McGraw-Hill, $12.95) by Williams Horwood which crosses Tolkien's *Ring* with *Watership Down*. In it, talking moles strike somewhat palsied Anglo-Saxon attitudes and read mole-braille with their snouts.

Adams has a definite affinity with the fantasy modality. He breaks new as well as traditional ground in 1980's *Girl in the Swing* (Knopf, $10.95) which is de la Motte Fougué's *Undine* with a more erotic ambiance. One also comes on the spoor of fantasy in Joyce Carol Oates's enormous new *Bellefleur*, (Dutton, $12.95) an attempt to achieve the apotheosis of the Gothic which fails because Miss Oates ignores the cautionary example of fantasy's practical muse, Lewis Carroll's Alice. (The *Alice* books are actually triumphs of fancy rather than of the shaping imagination working in the mode of fantasy; but that fact does not impair the force of Alice as an exemplar displaying the cool matter-of-factness and commonsensicality which must underlie and counterpoint all successful chronicles of wonder.) Alice's action, as she falls down the rabbit-hole in slow

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dream-tempo, is so perfect an illustration of this cardinal law for securing verisimilitude in fantasy that I quote it:

> She took down a jar from one of the shelves as she passed; it was labeled "ORANGE MARMALADE," but to her great disappointment it was empty; she did not like to drop the jar for fear of killing somebody underneath, so managed to put it into one of the cupboards as she passed.

I do not wish to be unfair to Miss Oates's stupendous experiment in gigantomachy. If parts ever add up to something more than a whole, it might be pointed out that her "Room of Contamination" chapter makes a first-rate bogle story; and the second half of "Fateful Mismatches," wherein Hepatica Bellefleur mates with a black bear, a *märchen* grimmer than Grimm. Ragnar Norst, in "The Bloodstone," turns out to be one of the more convincing vampires. "The Clavichord" gives off a pleasant set of chords worthy of that past mistress of the Gothic in needlepoint, Isak Dinesen.

It is also true Miss Oates will have it that she is after bigger game than fantasy's *frisson*—if, to be sure, cerebral assent in literature can ever be bigger game than imaginative. As she affirms in a prefatory note, Bellefleur "is a region, a state of the soul, and it does exist . . ." Of course, it does exist: it exists in Poe. Poe's somewhat "camped" shadow lies dark over this account of the doomed Bellefleurs. The woods and mountains around Lake Noir could be "the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir." A Poesque marmalade cat kills Hiram Bellefleur—otherwise, be it noted, Bellefleurs tend to disappear, like sojourners with Boojums, rather than to die, at least up to the day of the final family holocaust. (Be it also noted that the Manor's chief cat, Mahalaleel, is really more like Yeats's Minnaloushe than anything in Poe.) Again, the precocious, not yet four-years-old clairvoyante and enfant terrible who is Germaine Bellefleur is given to poring over the same books that once regaled Poe's Roderick Ussher.

But I am unregenerate in this matter of fantasy. Much as I have admired Miss Oates's work in the past, I reject *Bellefleur*'s gallimaufry, revolted above all else by the ultimate *lèse majesté* of Gideon Bellefleur's encountering Rip Van Winkle's dwarves still at their eternal game of bowls, shooting one of them, taking him home, rechristening him Nightshade, and establishing him as a faithful servitor.

Miss Oates piles a Pelion of marvels on her Gothic Ossa; but that is not the way to secure conviction on the reader's part. The high imagination must be grounded on homely as well as fantastic detail. Nothing "remains interesting where anything may happen," wrote H.G. Wells as preface to a collection of his science fiction. "The trick is always the same trick," Dorothy Sayers concluded of Dante, "it is the trick—and to some minds, the scandal—of particularity." Whether one is constructing a *Paradiso* or a *Perelandra*, a faun's house in Narnia or Middle-Earth in all its complexity, one needs both *lembas* to lift up the spirit and a jam jar to anchor it to earth.

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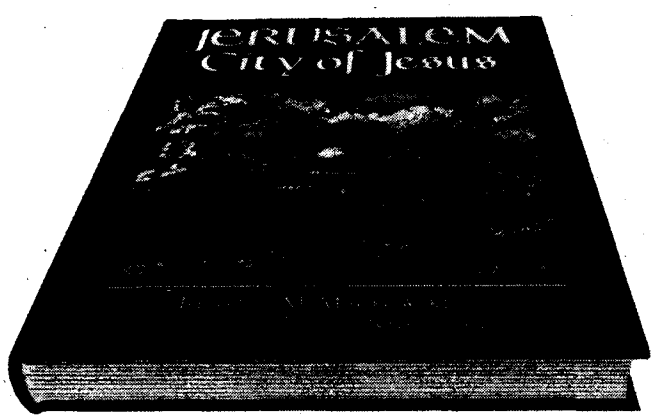

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Books: CRITICS' CHRISTMAS CHOICES

Richard John Neuhaus

OF THE BOOKS I have found most rewarding to read and argue with in the past year or so, I recommend the little paperback by Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Human Nature, Election, and History* (Westminster, $4.95, 116 pp.). In my opinion Pannenberg's continues to be the most impressive theological enterprise of our time, and in these essays he provocatively relates a Christian understanding of destiny to our world-historical moment. The focus is on the future of freedom and the kinds of social and political agencies that may be divinely "elected" to advance that future.

The British Methodist Geoffrey Wainwright is now at Union Seminary, New York. *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (Oxford, $24.95, 624 pp.) is a most ambitious effort to do theology according to the ancient axiom, *lex orandi lex credendi*, giving full rein to the interaction between Christian cerebration and celebration. The book is frequently prolix and disjointed, but it is a suggestive model which, one hopes, others will pick up on.

Walter Lippmann and the American Century (Atlantic-Little Brown, $19.95, 669 pp.) by Ronald Steel is a marvelously readable tour through American political thought and change of the last seventy years. The oddity of its tone results, I suspect, from the fact that Steel befriended Lippmann during his last years when both were adamantly opposed to the American venture in Vietnam. Fairly or not, all of Lippmann's career is viewed through that prism, and what does not conform to Steel's leftist bias is not treated kindly.

Robert Nisbet skims and plunges through the centuries and a vast literature in *History of the Idea of Progress* (Basic, $16.95, 370 pp). His "revisionist" views of the Renaissance are striking and his rather dour pespective on the future of Western civilization bracing. Once again, and along with thinkers such as Daniel Bell, Nisbet edges up to the proposition that the only hope is some kind of religiously-based reconstitution of Western culture.

The Neo-Conservatives (Simon and Schuster, $11.95, 355 pp.) is Peter Steinfels's response (reaction?) to Nisbet, Bell, Podhoretz, Kristol, and a host of others. Although marred by his puzzling animus toward Patrick Moynihan, Steinfels's study is one of the few tries from the left to appropriate and digest what is legitimate in the conservative critiques of the several liberalisms that have served us so poorly. In the light of November 4, 1980, it is hoped that others will follow his lead.

One of my least favorite persons is Henry Kissinger, but I finally got around to his *White House Years* (Little, Brown, $22.50, 1521 pp.) and received in return a remarkably lucid understanding of one way of viewing U.S.-Soviet relations in the scheme of international disorder. If one can stomach the implicit arrogance and manifest blindness in Kissinger's *apologia* for the handling of Indochina, there is much to be learned here about those tortured years as seen from one center of power.

Edward Ericson's *Solzhenitsyn: The Moral Vision* (Eerdmans, $12.95, 239 pp.) is a useful handbook for those familiar with the prophet's work and a good introduction for those who are not. The thesis is that one cannot begin to understand Solzhenitsyn unless it is clear that the religious and moral concerns have priority over the political. Ericson's study does not include the most recent and absorbing work, *The Oak and the Calf* (Harper & Row, $15.95, 453 pp.).

Man and Woman in Christ by Stephen Clark is a massive volume published by Servant Books (Ann Arbor, Mich., $15.95, 753 pp.). Massive and important. Clark is a Catholic of evangelical, even fundamentalist, sensibilities, especially in his treatment of Scripture. But his historical study, combined with a thorough examination of relevant material from the social sciences, makes this a book that will be hard to ignore in ongoing debates among Christians about feminism, homosexuality, the meaning of the family, women's ordination, and a cluster of other questions relating to male-female relations.

The one question that most directly joins religiously based moral judgment and public policy is abortion. The debate is almost certain to be intensified in the months and years ahead as, in one way or another, the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision is modified and perhaps reversed. An invaluable guide to the issues involved is *A Private Choice* (Free Press, $11.95, 288 pp.) by the distinguished professor of jurisprudence John Noonan. the argument is emphatically pro-life, but with a refreshing knowledge of and civility toward opposing views.

So there is a short list marking the route: theology, politics, social criticism and, inescapably, back to theology. Our culture is discovering, once again and with difficulty, that that is the circuit, spiraling toward the absolute future, that cannot be avoided. Because other circuits only return exhausted to where they began. Because pondering the absolute is, as Pannenberg might say (or Augustine, or Luther, or Rahner, for that matter), our origin and our end.

Robert F. Drinan

THE APPALLING poverty, sickness and illiteracy that plague at least one-fourth of humanity have elicited three frightening challenges to humanity's conscience. The most readable of these studies, because it is the least technical, is *North-South—A Program for Survival* (MIT Press, 304 pp., $4.95 paper). This crucially important volume, almost a best-seller in Europe but little known in America, contains the recommendations of the prestigious eighteen-person international group chaired by

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Willie Brandt on inequality in the world and the fact that 800 million persons live in total poverty and are afflicted by chronic malnutrition. This stark reality cannot be avoided, the Brandt Report concludes, either by domination of the Third World by the industrialized nations or by isolation from the world. It is "against everyone's interest to allow poverty to continue."

The grim revelations in this study are not new in the literature about the Third and Fourth Worlds. But the comprehensiveness of the material and the urgency behind its proposals are new—and welcome.

The Brandt Report is buttressed by the conclusions of *Overcoming World Hunger: The Challenge Ahead*, a report of the Presidential Commission on World Hunger (Government Printing Office, 151 pp., $6). This commission, chaired by Sol M. Linowitz, states the moral, humanitarian, technical, and economic arguments for eliminating world hunger but also stresses that political security for Americans is intimately linked to global efforts to assure an adequate diet for all of humanity. Pursuant to this premise, the Commission recommends in the most vigorous manner that the United States make the elimination of hunger the primary focus of its relationships with the developing countries. The Commission documents this proposal with an overwhelming array of information on the feasibility of eliminating hunger by the year 2000. If the Reagan administration desires to adopt a new dimension to our foreign policy which would help America's farmers, stabilize volatile regions of the world, and help to win friends in Asia and Africa, the report of the President's Commission on Hunger contains the blueprint.

Closely paralleling these two studies is the fascinating report to President Carter pursuant to his request for a "one-year study of the probable changes in the world's population, natural resources, and environment through the end of the century" (*The Global 2000 Report to the President*, Government Printing Office, 766 pp., $13).

The findings are startling. The population will grow from 4 billion in 1975 to

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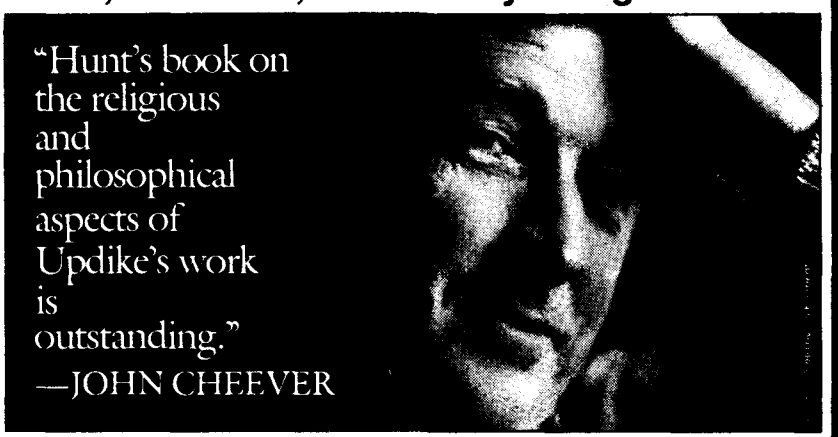
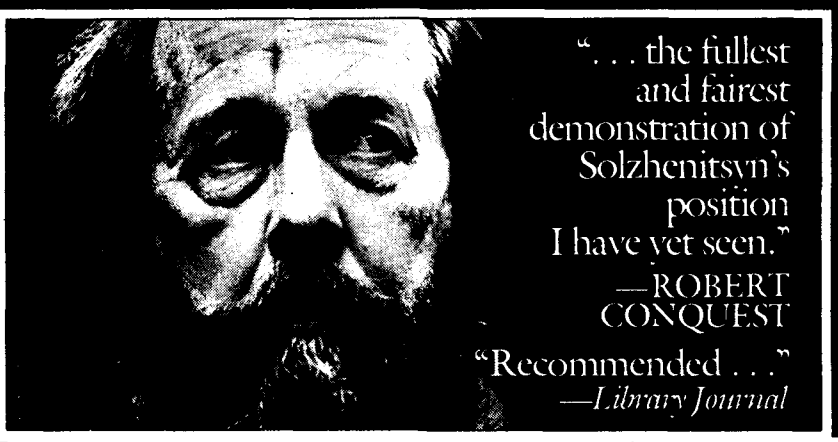
JOHN UPDIKE

AND THE THREE GREAT SECRET THINGS: SEX, RELIGION, AND ART by George W. Hunt

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THE MORAL VISION By Edward E. Ericson, Jr.

Foreword by Malcolm Muggeridge

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, whose fame as a novelist has nearly been overshadowed by his prominence as political critic, stands firmly in the tradition of Christian humanism, insists Ericson in this work-by-work analysis. It is in this strong moral vision that Ericson finds the underlying unity and power which inform Solzhenitsyn's literary as well as political expression. *Cloth, $12.95*

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6.35 billion in 2000. Arable land, however, will increase by only 4 percent in the next twenty years. Water resources will be inadequate, forests will be depleted, energy will be much more scarce, hunger will claim more babies and "more of those surviving will be mentally and physically handicapped by childhood malnutrition."

During 1980, Americans learned from a wide variety of sources that the future of up to one-third of humanity depends profoundly on what the 5 percent of humanity who reside in America do in the immediate future. The revelation and the recommendations are clear and compelling. Will they raise the consciousness and convince the consciences of the people in the most affluent nation in the history of the world that they must be their brother's keeper because they are their brother's brother?

Francine du Plessix Gray

CONTRARY TO many critics' expectations, this has been a vintage year for fine novels. Here are four of the ones I enjoyed the most.

Loon Lake, by Ed Doctorow (Random House, $11.95, 258 pp.). No other contemporary Americans novelist I can think of combines Doctorow's lyric inventiveness with the breadth of his political vision. *The Book of Daniel* dealt with the paranoia and fraudulent ideologies which prevailed among us during the years of the Cold War. *Ragtime*, a more fashionable but less important work, documented the gilded innocence of turn-of-the-century America. *Loon Lake* relates the ironic tensions between the despair of the working class and the extravagance of our privileged castes in the depression era. Doctorow's new novel makes a radical stylistic break with its predecessors. *Ragtime*'s cool staccato aestheticism ("Women visited the fleet carrying white parasols. There was a lot of sexual fainting. There were no blacks. There were no immigrants.") is replaced in *Loon Lake* by a rhapsodic, long-metered prose that is faintly reminiscent, in turn, of Walt Whitman, D.H. Lawrence and the picaresque Hallelujah-I'm-a-bum rhythms of Jack Kerouac. These are only fleeting associations, for I find *Loon Lake* to be the most original novel published in this country since *The Book of Daniel*. It is also Doctorow's first romantic novel, the first of his works in which the archetypal quest for The Ideal Woman is a dominating force of the narrative. And the obsession of Joe Korzeniowski, *Loon Lake*'s central protagonist, for the "blazingly beautiful, pissed-off" gangster's moll Clara Lukacs provides some of the most ecstatically beautiful prose in current fiction.

There is a curious ambivalence in the United States between our Calvinistic admiration for hard work and voluminous production and the suspicion with which we view an *artist* whose output is as large as Joyce Carol Oates's. We tend to take this national prodigy for granted, failing to honor the range of her virtuosity and the unique scholarship and charity which informs her critical prose. *Bellefleur* (E.P. Dutton $12.95) is Oates's twelfth novel. It is also her thirtieth or so book, being equally preceded by ten collections of short stories, three volumes of criticism, a few plays, and four books of verse. (My mind boggles when I think that she has combined this already Gargantuan oeuvre with a fulltime teaching schedule.) *Bellefleur* is a generational saga which documents the fate of an eccentric, wealthy family accursed by some tragic flaw which one could interpret as a nefarious combination of greed and passion. It is filled with such eerie phenomena as vampires, mountain gnomes, bears turning into men, a half-witted child who turns into a dog, a pond that breathes, a vicious-looking rat-like mammal which metamorphoses overnight into a wondrously beautiful, oversize cat. I began *Bellefleur* by resisting its Gothic aura, the ghosts of Mary Shelley lurking in its pages. But after sixty pages or so I accepted Oates's premises of magic realism, and was bewitched. Samuel Johnson once wrote that the best art "approximates the remote, and familiarizes the wonderful." *Bellefleur* amply fulfills that condition.

I am ashamed to say that *Morgan's Passing* (Knopf, $9.95, 311 pp.) is the first book of Anne Tyler's I've read. And I was so impressed by it that I've set myself the task of reading several of her earlier novels. Morgan is one of those interesting maternal men (increasingly prevalent in our best fiction) whose life becomes more of a shambles than ever when his children grow up and leave home. Tyler documents Morgan's obsession with two young puppeteers—1960's college drop-outs drawn with greater delicacy than any other counter-culture protagonists I can think of—whose baby he once delivered during his transient impersonation of a doctor. Tyler's ear for dialogue is formidable. *Morgan's Passing*, persistently funny, and affecting, is an engrossing and superbly-crafted book.

My addiction to Gilbert Sorrentino's writing began years ago when I first read excerpts of his work in Ted Solotaroff's much-mourned *New American Writing*. I was disappointed by his behemoth last novel, *Mulligan Stew*, which was bogged down by an aggressive, almost didactic commitment to post-Modernist techniques. But his new book *Aberrations of Starlight* (Random House, $9.95, 240 pp.) vibrates with imagination and energy on every one of its 200-odd pages. This buoyant, immensely witty novel takes place at a summer boarding house in rural New Jersey in the last years of the Depression. It focuses on the events of one weekend of that summer as they are viewed by each of Sorrentino's four central protagonists. The dialect of the Depression years, the rancor and prejudices of working-class Catholics on the eve of World War II, are rendered with Flaubertian precision. There is a marvelous tension between the deceptively prosaic facts of Sorrentino's plot and the richly varied pyrotechnics of his narrative style, which includes letters, interior monologues, outlandish fantasies, question-and-answer quizzes. The book's success is not confined to its technical virtuosity. Sorrentino's rigorously unsentimental view of sexual urges, his humorous compassion for our

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self-deceptions, his tragic vision of unfulfilled dreams make *Aberrations of Starlight* a masterpiece of current fiction.

John Deedy

MY READING during 1980 has been restricted pretty much to research in conjunction with writing projects of my own, but in those areas are three recent books for strong recommendation.

Foremost is Pierre Leroy's *Letters from My Friend Teilhard de Chardin* (Paulist Press, $10.95, 216 pp.). Poor Teilhard, even in death they won't let him rest; e.g., the charge in *Natural History* making him an accomplice in the Piltdown "man" fraud. Leroy's book has nothing to do with Piltdown. The letters cover a seven-year period (1948-55) long removed from Piltdown. Nevertheless they reveal a man who would be about as capable of Piltdown as Theresa of Lisieux. This was a good and holy man with utmost concern for his church, his scientific colleagues, for humankind, and for history. The letters, carefully set in context, make that plain. They are admirably translated by Mary Lukas. Overall, a moving document.

Shifting ground a bit, there is Charles A. Meconis's *With Clumsy Grace: The American Catholic Left, 1965-1975* (Seabury, $9.95, 204 pp.). The title tells the story: this is the record of Catholic opposition to the Vietnam war. Meconis details the opposition philosophy, describes tactics raid by raid, and probes the disintegration of the movement. It is a sympathetic report, and one which also raises some disturbing questions. Why, for instance, was the church unable to hold as believing members so many in the Catholic Left whose very witness grew out of their Catholicism? This is valuable history, but probably not for your aunt in Orange County.

Moving on from the war to specters of the moment, we have Daniel Berrigan's new book *The Discipline of the Mountain*, subtitled "Dante's Purgatorio in a Nuclear World" (Seabury, $8.95, 120 pp.). This is a typical Berrigan book: part prose, part poetry, all challenging. It is a

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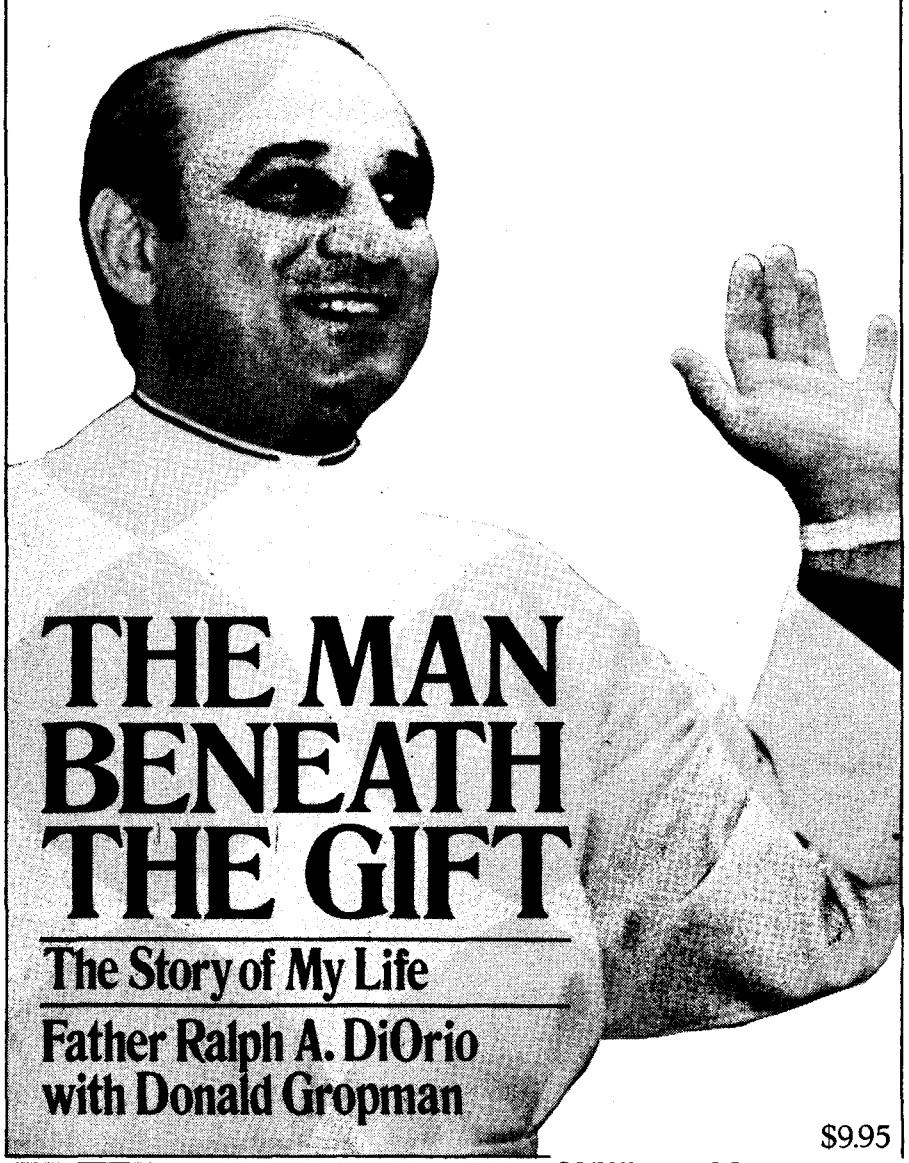

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free translation of the Purgatorio into modern idiom, thirteenth-century kings and princes shading into twentieth-century colonels, shahs, and juntas. It is an imaginative concept, which Berrigan serves up as a way for all of us to imagine our plight as dwellers in a nuclear age—and in a country which has opted to live by The Bomb. A sobering book, with haunting illustrations by Robert F. McGovern.

On the lighter side—I'm now into entertainment reading—there is Michael Garvey's *State O'Chassis: An Earful of Ireland* (Thomas More Press, $8.95, 179 pp.). It is a delightful, witty book that put me in the shoes of myself at Garvey's age, a wanderer around Ireland while a student at Trinity. If only I had Garvey's good sense to equip myself then with a pen as well as a stout corkscrew, said I to me as I paged through Garvey. This isn't Abbey Theater Ireland, which is reason all its own for recommending the book—heartily, as they say.

Finally, let me say a word for Robert E. Burns's book *The Examined Life* (Thomas More Press, $7.95, 141 pp.). Magazine columns do not always stand up as a book, but Burns's pieces from *U.S. Catholic* survive admirably within hard covers. Martin Marty comments in the foreword on the sane, civil tone of the book, and he's right. It does not lay out utopian or messianic formulas for remaking the world; it seeks no more than to provide a thoughtful person's view on everyday issues that touch our spiritual and secular lives. As such the book itself is thoughtful, and insightful.

Denise Levertov

I TEND to read several books at one time, leaving them in different rooms—perhaps a bad habit, but an inveterate one. I've just finished Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?* which I'm inclined to think may be his masterpiece. Currently I'm in the middle of three novels: *The Lost Traveller* by Antonia White (Virago Modern Classics, Dial Press, first published 1950, reprinted 1979, $5.95) a sequel to *Frost in May*, an old favorite of mine; *Land of Spices* (another reprint) by Kate O'Brien, (Millington, Dublin, Ireland) which like *Frost in May*, describes life in a convent school (this one in Ireland) around the turn of the century, and does so with wit and profundity; and *The Tree House Confessions*, a meditative semi-autobiographical fiction by James McConkey, whose limpid style and complex perceptions make him one of my favorite contemporary writers.

A number of books of poetry read in recent months seem especially noteworthy. I list them in random order:

Immigrants in Our Own Land, by Jimmy Santiago Baca (Louisiana State University Press, $9.95, 72 pp., $3.95 paper, 1979) a first book, written in prison by a young Chicano poet (he is free now). His work is rich in image and music, full of abundant energy and love of life even when describing the brutal and tragic.

Selected Later Poems of Marie Luise Kaschnitz, translated by Lisel Mueller (Princeton University Press, 1980, $9.95, $4.95 paper, 111 pp.). Mueller is that treasure among translators, a marvelous poet herself who is truly bilingual: one can have complete confidence in her. Kaschnitz (1901-1974) stayed in Germany throughout the Hitler years (she was in Frankfort throughout the fire bombings), and much of her poetry is dedicated to the task of "dealing with guilt and suffering, and recognizing that her silence during the Nazi period meant *de facto* complicity." The poems are tough, spare, and lyrical.

Peace March, by the late, much lamented Millen Brand (Countryman Press, Woodstock, Vermont 1980, $12.95, $6.95 paper, 222 pp.), a moving account (in the mode—somewhere between lyrical and documentary—he developed in *Local Lives*) of his participation in the Nagasaki-Hiroshima walk of 1977, when he was 71 and one of the first Americans to participate in this annual event. Poignant, often beautiful, it is a book full of the spirit and intelligence of a true man of peace.

De Repente/All of a Sudden by Teresa de Jesús, translated by Arlene and James Scully and Marie A. Proser (Curbstone Press, 1979). Forceful poems from Chile in the living Hispanic tradition which adapts and combines popular ballad forms with almost surreal images and passionate political engagement. The poet (using a pseudonym for obvious and tragic reasons) writes of the violent oppession in her own land, but to how many others do her words equally apply!

After Our War by John Balaban (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974, $3.95 paper, 84 pp.). Bitter, finely wrought poems by a poet who worked in Vietnam as a field representive for the Committee of Responsibility to Save War-Injured Children. Balaban's essay *Doing Good* (Hudson Review, Winter 1977) is, with these poems, probably the best writing by an American to have emerged from direct encounter with the horror of that war.

Two volumes of poetry and prose by the imprisoned South Korean poet Kim Chi Ha are now available: *The Middle Hour*, translated by David R. McCann (Human Rights Publishing Group, 1980) and *The Gold-Crowned Jesus and Other Writings*, translated by Choy Sun Kim and Shelly Killen (Orbis Books, 1978, $5.95, 178 pp.). There is some overlap, but the variant translations and the translators' introduction make the two editions complementary. As I myself wrote a preface for the McCann volume, I will not repeat myself here but instead quote from the introduction to the Orbis volume, in which the translators say of Kim Chi Ha, "Through his courageous conduct and stirring poems the young Korean poet lights us from the darkness of our habitual callousness and indifference to human dignity." They also quote from Camus's 1958 statement: "History's amphitheater has always contained the martyr and the lion . . . But until now, the artist was always on the sidelines. He used to sing . . . for his own sake . . . or to encourage the martyr and make the lion forget its appetite. But now the artist is in the amphitheater."

In varying degrees all these poets are indeed in that arena. This might seem untrue of the last I shall mention, Catherine de Vinck, several of whose collections (all published by Alleluia Press) I've been reading, including the text accompanying her record album, *A*

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Book of Eve (House of Poetry, 1980). De Vinck, who has 6 children, has spent the last 3 decades at home, caring for a son who was bedridden. But when she writes, for instance,

'Where are the children?
the voice asks:
woman-voice beating
great wings of words
against the walls.
. . .
When the bomb exploded
—Hiroshima, Birmingham
Jerusalem, Vietnam—
when . . . the fire-beast
began to slither through the
roof
the children ran out: coated
with flames, they ran down
the road,
their dying . . .
transcribed on photographs,
sold to newspapers and
magazines,'

she voices, out of a private and domestic place, the anguish of all the women in the world who realize their actual or possible children may have no world at all. De Vinck is no detached observer. However, her eloquent, beautiful sensual poems (many of which are devotional) convey an underlying hopefulness and often an ecstatic celebration of living.

A book no household should be without is Helen Caldicott's *Nuclear Madness* (Autumn Press, $3.95, 122 pp.) It is more important than ever, now that we're to try and survive four years of Reagan and Bush, that the people should learn the facts. It could still turn their thinking around before it's too late. Dr. Caldicott manages to present those facts and figures in a simple, comprehensible way, and at the same time to convey something of the passion and unpretentiousness that make her such a dynamic speaker.

Finally, another reprint, *The Artist's Journey into the Interior* by Erich Heller, (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich—Harvest Books, 1978, $4.50 paper, 240 pp.) contains some reflections which seem even more timely now than when they first appeared 20 years ago, on the implications of that anthropocentric arrogance which has brought us, as a species, to our present pass. In the opening essay, "Faust's Damnation," Heller speaks of Goethe's belief that evil arises from any knowing and doing of man that is in excess of his "being." Man aspiring to a freedom of the mind fatally beyond the grasp of his "concrete imagination," seeking power over life through actions that overreach the reaches of his soul, acquiring a virtuosity inappropriately superior to his "virtue"—this was Goethe's idea of *hubris*, his divination of the meaning of black magic. Absolute activity, activity unrestrained by the condition of humanity, he once said, leads to bankruptcy; and "everything that sets our minds free without giving us mastery over ourselves is pernicious." It "raises man's power above the substance of his being." And Heller recounts an ancient Chinese story about a sage "who once met a simple man, his better in wisdom. The sage, seeing how the man watered his field in a very primitive manner, asked him: 'Don't you know that there is a contraption called a draw-well, a kind of machine that would enable you to water a hundred such little fields in one day?' And he received this reply: 'I have heard my teacher say: He who uses machines, conducts his business like a machine. He who conducts this business like a machine, will soon have the heart of a machine. He who has the heart of a machine, has lost all certainties of the spirit. He who has lost the certainties of the spirit, must needs sin against the meaning of life. Yes, I do know such machines as you speak of, but I also know why I shall not use them.' " If we could learn something from that—not quite literally, indeed, but in viable modification—we would have more hope of a future on our poor mistreated planet than we can reasonably claim this year.

Francine Cardman

LATELY I HAVE found myself looking for and listening to the voices of women. Three of the voices I have heard this year stand out particularly clearly. Anne Morrow Lindbergh's

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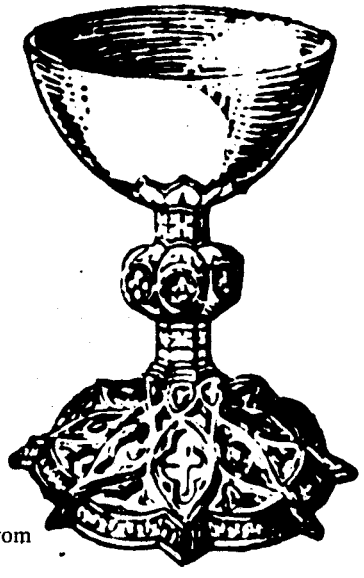

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Gift from the Sea (Vintage Books, $1.95, 140 pp.) first appeared twenty-five years ago. That it is still in print at a time when books disappear from print almost as rapidly as they materialized, makes its longevity as surprising as it is well-deserved. Social and political light years seem to have elapsed since 1955, yet given the mood of the country, one wonders how many of the gains made in the interval will last. The women's movement in particular seems in for a hard time. *Gift from the Sea* speaks to many of the underlying concerns of feminism in a remarkably contemporary voice that may well be better heard than others today precisely because it lacks the feminist vocabulary that is, unfortunately, a verbal red flag for so many people.

Reflecting on the situation of woman in America in 1955 (a reflection as prescient as it was perceptive), Lindbergh identifies some of the forces that work against women experiencing their lives as being "in grace": multiple demands and distractions, an instinct to give that leads women to "spill [themselves] away" purposelessly, "*Zerrissenheit*—torn-to-pieces-hood." Moved by the various shells she encounters as gifts from the sea during several weeks at the beach without her husband and children, she also points out directions on the way of grace. *Simplicity*—"to ask how little, not how much, can I get along with." *Solitude*—"the timeless inner strength of women" which calls them to "be the pioneer in achieving this stillness, not only for her own salvation, but for the salvation of family life, of society, perhaps even of our civilization." *Relationship*—both the refinding of self once the early intensity is past ("woman can best refind herself by losing herself in some kind of creative activity of her own") and the shedding of shells called for in middle age. And *wholeness*—"Woman must come of age by herself. This is the essence of 'coming of age'—to learn to stand alone. . . . She must find her true center alone. She must become whole." Like the shells on the beach which serve as signposts on the way to this graced wholeness, *Gift from the Sea* is itself an unexpected gift for our time.

A rather different voice from an even earlier time can also be heard afresh today. Catherine of Siena, that astonishing 14th century saint, gadfly, and (since 1970) Doctor of the Church, speaks boldly and directly in the sparkling translation by Suzanne Noffke, O.P., of *The Dialogue* (Paulist Press, $7.95, 398 pp.). *The Dialogue* is Catherine's narration of her intense mystical experience and conversation with God, the fruit of her search for union with the divine Truth and Love which had led her more deeply into "the world's need." Noffke's translation gives voice to Catherine's experience and makes it accessible to us in the first English translation since 1895 (the only other dates to the 15th century). The idiom is contemporary without being jarring; the language is non-sexist without being unfaithful to the text (God remains "Father" and "He," Christ is "Son") or calling attention to itself. In fact, Noffke is so skillful and subtle that it was some time before I realized, with delight, that I hadn't been reading about "God and man" or "mankind" or "men," but rather (and rather naturally) that "God was made human and humanity was made God," or that "I want to show you how a person comes to be my friend, and once my friend, becomes my child by attaining filial love."

In her energy, her impatience, her sense of her own authority, and her respectful but unawed approach to ecclesiastical authority (she could urge the pope to act like a man and return the papacy to Rome from Avignon as easily as she could denounce the miserable state of the clergy, while also acknowledging the reverence due the sacramental ministry of both), Catherine is an apt saint for our day. In her profound sense of the sociality of human existence, of the relation to neighbor as the test and expression of the love of God, and of the reciprocity of prayer and action, Catherine is also a necessary saint for a time of withdrawal and retreat into supposed interiority such as ours.

Finally, if only for the essay "Many Mansions," which offers a depressing glimpse into the soul of Ronald Reagan as revealed by the California governor's mansion built during his administration and to his tastes, but never occupied, Joan Didion's *The White Album* (Pocket Books, $2.75, 221 pp.) would deserve attention. What is the matter with the house that Reagan built that Jerry Brown won't live in? Didion exposes the heart of the matter deftly, laying bare the heart of Ronald Reagan as well: "One hears every possible reason for not living in the house except for the one that counts: it is the kind of house that has a wet bar in the living room. It is the kind of house that has a refreshment center. It is the kind of house in which one does not live, but there is no way to say this without getting into touchy and evanescent and finally inadmissible questions of taste, and ultimately of class. I have seldom seen a house so evocative of the unspeakable."

It is exactly Didion's own evocations of the unspeakable, her piercing revelations of the ridiculous and the horrifying beneath the surface of things, that make the essays collected in *The White Album* so compelling and, often, so uncomfortable. She *sees* more. The mother who "put her five-year-old daughter out to die on the center divider of Interstate 5 some miles south of the Bakersfield exit." Huey Newton, an enrolled member of the Kaiser Foundation Health Plan. Orchids, mudslides and forest fires in a Los Angeles County canyon. The National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, "Punchbowl," in which many "ship-in Vietnams" are buried after being "transmitted" to their families in the States and then returned to Hawaii for burial. Even Didion's fascination with dams, waterworks, and shopping centers cuts to the center of the technological alienation on which our culture is built.

Didion speaks from the depths of sight where dark and light are often indistinguishable, where reality blurs and the narrative line no longer holds. Hospitalized for vertigo and nausea in June 1968, her situation was described, in a psychiatric report from which she quotes, as that of a "personality in the process of deterioration." "In her view," the report observed, "she lives in a world of people moved by strange, conflicted, poorly comprehended, and, above all, devious motivations which commit them inevitably to conflict and failure. . . ." In listening to Joan Didion,

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one sees with undeniable clarity that the world of her inner eye is our own.

Raymond A. Schroth

AS AN EDUCATOR—a dean of a small midwestern college—I have tried, with mixed success, to define the heart and guts of the educational process as a love—indeed, a passion—for books. Yet, as an academic administrator who is both a teacher and an its-time-to-jump-off-the-shelf-and-write-again journalist, as a person trying to nourish an intellectual life, my reading has various clearly defined purposes. Here are some of the books I have read this year. I don't recommend them all.

To become a more "successful" administrator I read some survival guides: for example, half of Richard H. Buskirk's *Modern Management and Machiavelli* (Mentor, $2.25. 210 pp.), "The executive's guide to the psychology and politics of power," a contemporary commentary on *The Prince*, which warns that conspirators may succeed in axing a dean but will never be trusted by his successor, and that the key to Machiavellian thought is that "the prince ought to read history and study the actions of eminent men;" and Donald E. Walker's *The Effective Administrator* (Jossey-Bass) which cautions that "administrators indeed should recognize their responsibility to absorb the hostility and misunderstanding of others."

To keep writing—to review it for the *Kansas City Star*—I read Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song* (Little Brown $16.95, 1056 pp.); rather, I suffered throught it, not in the sense of resisting Mailer's masterpiece, but in the pain of compassion—suffering through the historical fact that there should be a man so doomed, so cruel, so godforsaken yet, in the Christian sense, so God-loved as Gary Gilmore, and that his blowing away should become an entertainment. A Jesuit friend assigned *The Executioner's Song* to his class in criminal justice; I suspect for the same reasons I assigned Tom Wicker's *A Time to Die* (Ballantine, $1.95, 436 pp.), to my freshman writing class—with the hope that students could learn to discover human dignity where it is most hidden.

I've read some history and studied the lives of "eminent men," partly to try to write about them, partly to get a sense of the thin line between success and failure, both real and perceived. In Theodore H. White's *In Search of History* (Warner, $5.95, 561 pp.), we see the contemporary "successful" journalist dogging the rails, warm and in the glow of eminent men, yet still so wounded by having been blacklisted and jobless in his earlier career that his patriotism has turned sentimental and his critical sense has gone dull.

This summer, in our own small scale search for history, two Jesuit friends and I drove west from Kansas City up through Nebraska, Wyoming, and Montana to Idaho where I sat on a porch overlooking Hayden Lake with John Burke's *Buffalo Bill: the Noblest* Whiteskin (G. P. Putnam's Sons, '73, 320 pp.), one of the most enjoyable books I've read in years. Buffalo Bill, who my father, as a young boy, had seen shooting glass balls out of the air, in a parade in Trenton at the turn of the century. Yet was there ever a more pathetic "great" American—once the imagined epitome of manliness, but sick and drunk in his final years, wobbling through his wild west show to pay off his debts, ridiculed by the drunks on a Kansas City street corner who offered his horse a swig of gin?

So I pick up James Thomas Flexner's *Washington: The Indispensable Man* (Mentor, $2.95, 430 pp.), a book every American should read. How many men have suffered more defeats to be remembered only for the victories? Who has borne so many disappointments and betrayals and kept his essential vision so intact? "Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair."

But often the most powerful book of the year is the one waiting to be read. Three years ago, when I was book editor, Harvey Cox phoned in his critic's choice, John Fowles's *Daniel Martin* (Little Brown, $12.95, Signet, $2.95), for the reader who cared about politics, friendship, cinema, writing, religion and national character. Last week, prompted by Cox's 1977 review, a friend gave me *Daniel Martin* as a birthday gift. I suspect it will be my book of the year.

Kathryn Marshall

DESTINATIONS, Jan Morris, (Oxford/Rolling Stone, $12.95, 242 pp.) Travel writing is a broad and often dreary genre, one that takes in everything from the least memorable ravings of D. H. Lawrence to the stuff of airlines glossies. That's why I'm hesitant to call these elegant essays travel writing—let me call them instead the record of a whimsical wanderer.

Jan Morris is one of the few writers who can convince me I don't know a place until I've read about it. Take her "Los Angeles: The Know-How City." For three years I lived just down the freeway from the subject of this essay, yet I never saw, as Morris does, the passion for order behind "the flash and the braggadocio." Nor did I believe the city was informed by anything other than a mad randomness. She, however, reflecting on certain peculiarities of geography, finds our second largest city "a balefully organic phenomenon," a place that, could it be "pried out of its setting . . . would be like a dried mat of some bacterial mold, every hump, every corner exactly shaped to its landscape."

In her piece on Washington she accounts for the anxiety that dogged me every moment of my year there. It had to do with the willful blindness, the illusion of eternity, that's central to life in the capital. Says Morris: "I could not easily imagine Washington actually deserted, but as I sat there in the hot sun I did not find it hard to imagine the city past its heyday . . . the gleaming white of the capitol grey and fretted, the pool blotched with scum, the cherry trees dead in their twos and threes, litter blowing across the grass and slogans scrawled on the statues' plinths." She finds herself thinking, almost inevitably, of cities like Calcutta and of empires that once assumed their own permanence.

Communion with *genii loci* is no small ambition, but Morris possesses the gift of conjuring. Whether her destination is Manhattan or London, Panama or South-

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ern Africa, she evokes the spirits of place with polish and wit.

A Soldier's Embrace, Nadine Gordimer (Viking, $8.95, 144 pp.)

South Africa's Nadine Gordimer is no wanderer—these stories are rooted in the soil of apartheid. Some examine hate and loyalty in that strange society at the toe of Africa. Others treat of a condition that might be called apartheid of the soul, the sort of separateness that even love can't alter.

Two stories in this collection that come back to me most vividly are "Town and Country Lovers" and "Time Did." The first is told with a journalistic precision that at times becomes mockery of South Africa's Fleet Street news style. It tells of two ill-fated interracial love affairs: one pair is arrested for contravening the Immorality Act and the other is discovered when the black woman has the white man's child. And yet what dooms these relationships isn't the law so much as the lovers' inabilities to see themselves except as the law sees them.

"Time Did" doesn't demand a South African context. The narrator is a woman watching a man grow away from her, a woman who marks time by her lover's changing affections. The story's controlled tone lets Gordimer render, as if in slow motion, certain simple, wordless cruelties: "I am not old and ugly yet but you can see your death in my changing face. I am more agile and supple than you (when, from time to time, we have been able to spend a few days together we have competed with morning exercises on the floor of a hotel room) but in my slackened behind turned to you in the bathroom as I shower, in the sunburned wattle that webs between my thin jaw and my neck, you see the final softening of the flesh that is coming to you as a man one day, your death as a lover of women."

A Soldier's Embrace displays a wide range of narrative skills. Several stories follow conventional form, others seem to borrow from film, and one—"A Lion on the Freeway"—calls to mind epigram and dream. Gordimer, always at her best when writing short, is better than ever in this collection. The language is shrewd and economical and the vision unrelenting.

Rosemary Deen

BECAUSE I find current novels easier to start than to finish I loved William Maxwell's *So Long, See You Tomorrow*, (Knopf, $7.95, 128 pp.) for its language as I read and for its beautiful structure when I had finished. The "start" of the novel is in the middle (at its heart) in the unrecognizing glance that one boy, the narrator, gives another in the corridor of a Chicago high school. Because of this failure of the heart, the second boy's story cannot be told: his point of view does not exist. But as mirrors of this lost person, the narrator tells two stories: his own, beginning when he was eight with the death of his mother; and the adult story—marriage, adultery, murder, suicide—of his friend's parents.

I could hardly get enough of the narrator-child's point of view, especially the house of his parents: the look and feel of the furniture that fits a little body; and the childhood shock of the house sold, gone one sudden day after school, with all its rooms, furniture, and light. In spite of everything kindly in life child losses and adult losses do not coincide though they share the same center. The reader's gain is the fiction: the child who isn't there except in reflections, and as he joins the two parts of the novel an odd, imagined connection of unrecognition.

A Geography of Poets, a Bantam paperback edited by Edward Fields ($2.95, 300 pp.), is the book for you if you want to read contemporary poetry but are disheartened by the books you pick off the bookstore shelf and open to a page of straw. Here are 228 American poets publishing in the last ten years arranged by region. I liked most of the poems. For single volumes I recommend Richard Wilbur's *The Mind Reader* (Harvest, $3.50, 227 pp.) of last year; Seamus Heaney's *Fieldwork* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $8.95), and Thomas Kinsella's *Poems 1956-1973* ($10.25, $6.25 paper, 192 pp.) and *Peppercannister Poems 1972-1978* ($9.95, $5.95 paper, 159 pp., Wake Forest University Press).

Anthologists never do well by Richard Wilbur (some unreconsidered image of him has stuck in their minds), so it is self-defense to buy his books. "Cottage Street, 1953" (about Sylvia Plath) is a dazzler. Seamus Heaney is recommended everywhere and needs no intermediary. I also like poets who are stubbornly strict, serious, political like Thomas Kinsella, who grows leaner and more civil and humane.

Susanne Langer's *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling*, the first two volumes available in paperback (John Hopkins University Press, Vol. I, $3.95, 487 pp., Vol. II, $4.95, 400 pp.) is a great and absorbing study, the crown of her life's work. As often happens, the crest of her intellectual power is reached long after the waves of her first popularity. Mrs. Langer's mighty subject now is "The

CRITICS

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS *is a Lutheran pastor, author and lecturer living in New York.*

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FRANCINE du PLESSIX GRAY *is the author of* Divine Disobedience *and* Lovers & Other Tyrants. *Her new novel will be published next year.*

JOHN DEEDY, *formerly of* Commonweal, *has completed an "interim biography" of Daniel Berrigan, to be published in 1981 by Fides/Claretian.*

DENISE LEVERTOV, *poet and critic, is the author of numerous books including* Life in the Forest *and* Collected Earlier Poems 1940-1960.

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DAVID TRACY *is professor of theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School. He is the author of* Blessed Rage for Order *and the forthcoming* The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism *(Crossroads).*

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nature and origin of the veritable gulf that divides human from animal mentality, in a perfectly continuous course of development of life on earth. . . . For animals have mental functions, but only man has a mind, and a mental life." The mere announcement of such a subject from such a scholar, thinker, and writer ought to cause a stampede at the bookstore.

Like all great books this one is important both for what it says and as an example of saying. There are cogent and brilliant essays on behaviorism, evolution, animal behavior, and animal "language." Those who believe that the brain is a computer could be fed small spoonsful of Mrs. Langer's discussion of this question every morning for breakfast, to the great improvement of their information and reasoning powers.

The book is an example of how to *negotiate* ideas: nothing so learned or fine that is not lifted into the streaming life blood of energetic discourse. Reading it, we finally envision the philosopher's "virtual life": the exuberant patience of the thinker for whom no labor of learning is not enlivening by deeper draughts of the thing itself.

David Tracy

IF YOU ARE tired of reading about the strange theology of the Moral Majority (who isn't?), three recent books from the creative minority in theology should interest you.

Those who have read Edward Schillebeeckx's first volume, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (Seabury, 1978, $24.50, 767 pp.) will be both confirmed and surprised by the contents of the second volume, entitled *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord* (Seabury, 1980, $29.50, 925 pp.). The continuity between the two volumes is Schillebeeckx's masterly use of scriptural scholarship and his original and often daring theological reflections. Where the first volume concentrated on historical analysis of the "historical Jesus," this second volume uses a more literary critical approach to interpret the different understandings of salvation in Christ in the New Testament. This literary approach is not only successful on its own terms but in fact more persuasive than the historical approach in Volume I. And thanks to a new translator it is also far more readable.

The most notable fact about the second volume is that here at the length and with the exegetical care needed, readers may now find a brilliant refutation of the still common belief that the New Testament's understanding of salvation is both apolitical and individualistic. Indeed in Schillebeeckx's capable hands, even the Letter to the Hebrews begins to bear political tonalities. For myself, this second volume in Schillebeeckx's developing Christology is even more impressive than his much discussed Volume I. Both deserve serious attention. I remain unconvinced by the main argument of Volume I that we should build a contemporary Christology on the results of historical work on the "historical Jesus." I am persuaded, however, that Schillebeeckx has provided the most substantive defense to date for that position. More importantly in this second volume he has now provided the best analysis available of the socio-political character of Christian salvation. And just this is badly needed in our present context. Thanks to Schillebeeckx it is now available.

In the meantime, the most brilliant political theologian in Europe, Johann Baptist Metz, has produced a relatively small (for a European theologian) but explosive volume on political theology entitled *Faith in Society and History* (Seabury, 1980, $12.95, 237 pp.) All of Metz's familiar and powerful themes are present in this remarkable little book: the "dangerous memory" of Jesus, the need for narrative to keep alive the memory of the suffering of all of the oppressed, the need for apocalypse to destroy all complacency, the need for utopian and eschatological visions for political theory, and above all the centrality of praxis over all theories. Like his mentor, Karl Rahner, Metz often writes as a theologian's theologian, assuming his readers are familiar with the many alternative positions he discusses and debates. Like his other mentor, Walter Benjamin, Metz's compressed and powerful style fuses theology and philosophy, critical social theory and narrative, aphorisms and actions. Like both Rahner and Benjamin, Metz gives more in a short intense compass than many others manage in volumes. In this recent book, Metz has articulated his own political theology with the passion and the critical power the subject demands. The book deserves far more political attention that it has thus far received on these shores.

The third major book in theology published in this past year is Hans Küng's *Does God Exist?* (Doubleday, 1980, $17.50, 839 pp.). Here Küng provides one of his most sustained philosophical and theological treatments of a single major issue. Indeed that issue is no less than *the* major theological issue, the reality of God. The most striking feature of the work is Küng's extensive discussion of the reality of fundamental trust as the prior existential issue for asking the question of God. This insistence strikes me as exactly right. The classical debates for and against the existence of God understandably did not first treat the question of a prior trust or mistrust in reality itself. Yet in our own period since at least the time of Pascal the question is both more existentially significant and logically prior to the further questions of either theism or atheism. Küng not only knows this but devotes the major and best part of the entire book to the discussion of the question of nihilism before discussing the question of atheism or his own theistic response. Küng's own "yes" to reality, his affirmation of fundamental trust, is entirely persuasive. His Hegelian treatment of the nature of God's reality makes him, to American eyes, a kind of "anonymous process theologian." All in all, Küng has written a masterly exposition of the questions that most contemporary Westerners really pose when they ask the ultimate theological questions: does God exist? Who is God? Can we ultimately trust any reality?

Theology, in sum, continues to seem alive and well and really pluralistic—as these three very different books testify. These works remind us that theological books need not be read only in Lent. Theology also celebrates faith and the Christmas season. Try Schillebeeckx, Metz, and Küng this season: Handel's *Messiah* will sound even better.

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